Temples of Tamilnadu

A Pilgrims's Guide

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Temples of Tamilnadu

A Pilgrim's Guide

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INTRODUCTION

Tamilnadu is situated on the southern tip of the Indian Peninsula. It is the gateway to the south offers everything that interest a visitor. Magnificent temple with towering (Gopurams) historical monuments art, culture, heritage and many more.

Tamilnadu is the home to some of the most exquisite temples in the world. Up to 700 BC. temples were scooped out of rocks, the Pallavas (up to 900 BC.) rulers were the pioneers, the Cholas (900 - 1250AD.) added ornate mandapams and large gopurams. The Pandyas (up to 1350AD.) saw the emergence of huge towers, high wall enclosures and towered gate ways, and the Naicks (1600 - 1750 AD.) developed large Prakarams and Pillared halls.

Tamilnadu has over 2000 years of continuous cultural history. Tamil is one of the oldest literary languages in India, some of its poetry dating back before the birth of Christ.

CHENNAI

Chennai, the capital of Tamil nadu, is the gate way to South India. It is home to dozen temples, some of them over 1200 years old.

Sri Parthasarathy Temple:

This Vaishnavite temple at Triplicane is dedicated to Lord Parthasarathy, is one of the 108 Divya Desams. It was built in the 8th

Sri Parthasarathy Temple

Century by an early Pallava King. The temple has five shrines and is the only Divya Desams, when Lord Krishna is seen enshrined with images of his family.

According to a legend, the Saptha Rishis have worshipped the five deities in this temple, know as Pancha Veeras. They are Venkata Krishnaswamy with Rukmimi, Satyaki, Balarama, Pradyumna, and Aniruddha. The alli flowers in the temple tank lend the name Allikkeni. Tiruvallikkeni is one of the well visited Divya Desams, and is a well known landmark in the Chennai meteropolis.

Tirumanjanam is performed on Fridays to Venkatakrishnan. The annual Bhrammotsavam is celebrated in the month of Chittirai (April - May) for 10 days. The glass palanquin here is of great beauty. Vaikuntha Ekadasi celebrated in Margazhi (Dec- Jan) draws a large number of pilgrims.. Vaikuntha ekadasi is celebrated for 20 days.

Sri Kapaleeswarar Temple:

This ancient temple at Mylapore is dedicated to Sri Kapaleeswarar an aspect of Lord Shiva. The legend is goddess Parvathi transformed herself into a peacock and worshiped Lord Shiva to obtain deliverance. This legend is portrayed in a sculpture inside the temple. The temple has a Vast tower studded with stucco images.

The temple is famed for being the site of a miracle when saint *Gnanasambandar* sang a hymn to Lord Kapaleeswarar to resurrect a dead girl from her ashes. This is sculpturally represented in the shrine of the saint in front of the temple flagstaff.

Sri Marundeeswarar Temple:

This ancient temple is situated in Tiruvanmyur. The vast temple complex as you leave the city, when you drive south of Chennai along the coast. This is the 25th Tevara Stalams in the Tondai region. Here Lord Siva is dedicted as Marundeeswarar, and Ambal is dedicated as Chokka Nayaki, and Tripura Sundari.

The legends says that Valmiki Maharishi is said to have worshipped Shiva here. Kamadhenu is said to have poured her milk

over the Shivalingam and offered worship. The Vedas and the Devas are said to have worshipped Shiva here, in this large temple.

Sri Karumaariamman Temple:

The Karumaariamman temple at Tiruverkadu near Chennai is one of the most revered and visited temples in the vicinity of Chennai. It enshrines an image of Karumaariamma, discovered in an anthill. This shrine was enlarged and rebuilt in the middle of the 20th century. An image of Renuka Parameswari, is enshrined in the sanctum, in front of Devi Karumaari Amman. A tank is located in front of the temple entrance.

The temple has been designed so that the rays of the sun illuminte the sanctum in the months of Thai and Aadi. The Aadi Utsavam, Thai Poosam, and Chitra Pournami are the festivals celebrated here.

Other Temples in the City:

Asta Lakshmi temple at Adyar, Murugan Temple at Vadapalani, Rajarajeswari temple at Nanganallur, Ekambareswarar temple at North Chennai Kalikambal Temple at George Town.

MAHABALIPURAM

(64 Km from Chennai)

It is situated on the shore of the Bay of Bengal. It is a must-visit destination if you are in the south India. The history of Mahabalipuram dates back to two thousand years, it contains nearly forty monuments of different types including an "open air bas relief" which is the largest in the world, for centuries it has been a center of pilgrimage.

The proper name of the site is "Mamallapuram", after Mamalla, an honorific of the Pallava king, Narasimha Varman I (630-668), who created the earliest of its monuments. But it is popularly called *Mahabalipuram*.

Shore Temple:

Internationally renowned shore temple and other Marvelous stone. Close to these is the two-spire **Shore Temple**, which was built

Shore Temple

in the 8th century. It has shrines to Shiva and Vishnu. Originally much closer to the water, the temples now stand about 100m inland as the waters have receded.

Sri Sthalasayana Perumal Temple:

This temple is very near to the bus stand. Here Lord Vishnu without his weapons, the Sanku and the Chakra, and without his customary "bed", Adi Sesha, is somehow a humbling experience.

Sri Sthalasayanaperumal Temple

Lying on the ground with one hand supporting his head and the other raised up in the traditional gesture of invitation, the Lord somehow seems defenceless, though the rational mind says this is not true. Of course, it is only a posture he has assumed to make it clear how accessible he is to the true devotee. In this case, Sage Pundarika, a great devotee of Lord Vishnu. The temple being referred to is the "Sthalasayana Perumal", which has been described by the Azhwars as "Kadalmallai".The goddess here is "Nilamangai", the goddess of the earth.

Thirukadalmallai is one of the 108 Vaishnavite Divya Desams sung of by the Azhwars. It is also the birthplace of ***Bhoothathalwar***, one of the earliest of the Alwars.

Pancha Pandava Rathas:

The Pallavas had perfected the art of sculpting rocks to build temples without using brick, mortar, or timber and the five monolithic rathas (chariots) reflect this art at it's best. These five rock temples which have been carved in the form of processional temple chariots have been named after the Pandava brothers, the heroes of the Great Indian Epic ***Mahabharatha.***

The Rath Temples are among the most famous temples in India partly for their age and partly for their quirky architecture.

Thirukkalukundrum Temple

These Pallava temples were carved out of huge rocks and though the coarse sea air is taking its toll and some of the structures were left incomplete, they attract scores of visitors every year. They have all the characteristic features of a south Indian temple like gopurams, a pillared hall, and sculptures on the walls.

Thirukkalukundram: (10 km from Mahabalipuram)

Sri Vedagiriswarar Temple is situated on the top of a hill. It is famous for its temple when two kites are fed daily around noon by a temple priest. Legend has it that these two birds are actually saints who to rest at the temple on their flight between Varnasi and Rameshwarm.

There is also a larger Siva temple in the town below. At the south-east end of the town is a spacious tank whose waters are said to have curative powers. Once every 12 years, a ***conch*** is discovered in this tank and thousands of devotees flock to bathe in the tank at this auspicious time. A collection of the conches is displayed in the larger temple.

Thiruporur: (25 km from Chengalpet)

This ancient Murugan temple dating back to the Pallava period and is one of 33 major temples in Tamilnadu dedicated to the worship of Lord Muruga.

Melmaruvathur Sri Adi Parasakthi Temple:

This temple is 36 km from Chengalpet. Devotees are permitted to enter into the Garbha Griha (inner Chamber) and pray to the Goddess.

KANCHIPURAM

(76 Km from Chennai)

Kanchipuram is considered one of the seven sacred cities of India. The ancient City of Thousand Temples is the major Hindu Pilgrim center. Kanchipuram was the capital of Pallavas during 6th to 8th Centuries AD. It has magnificent temples of unique architectural beauty bearing eloquent testimony to its glorious Tamil heritage.

Sri Kamakshi Amman Temple:

This famous temple is one of the three Shakthi Pedams in India. It was built by the Cholas in the 14th century AD. The sanctum faces the Gayatri Mandapam. The beautiful Kamakshi Devi is in the Padmasana posture, holding a bow of sugarcane and arrows of flowers. The ***Kamakotipeedam*** or ***Sri Chakram*** established by saint ***Adi Shankara*** is in front of the goddess and all pujas are offered to this. Kamakshi being the principal goddess in Kanchipuram, the Shiva temples here have no separate sanctum of Shakti.

Sri Ekambareswarar Temple:

This is another ancient temple in Kanchipuram. This temple has the distinction of being renovated by successive empires, the Pallavas, the Cholas and the Vijayanagar Kings. The 57meters high Rajagopuram is one of the tallest gopuram in South India. Sri Ekambareswara is worshipped in the form of ***Prithivi Lingam*** (Earth). The two thousand five hundred years old ***mango tree*** inside the temple is the biggest attraction.

Sri Kailasanadar Temple:

This temple is located at the western end of the city. It was built by the Pallava king Rajasimha and his son Mahendra in the 8th Century AD. This temple is dedicated to Lord Shiva. It is the oldest structure in Kanchipuram and finest example of Pallava architecture in South India.

Of all the temples in India, no other edifice has been so elaborately filled with all the 64 aspects of Lord Shiva. The temple is unique in its architecture and is viewed more as an architectural wonder than as a holy place. Hence, it is never crowded with locals. But, once in a year during Shivaratri festival large crowds visit the temple and there could be hours of waiting in long queues.

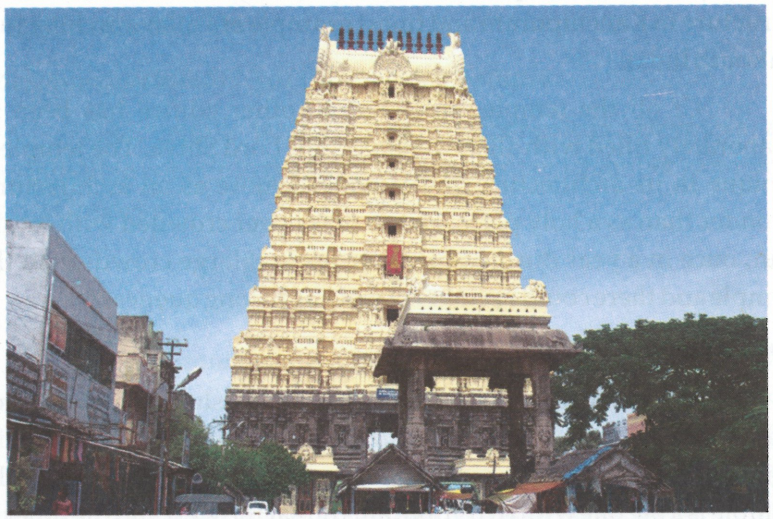
Sri Varadaraja Perumal Temple:

At Chinna (Little) Kanchipuram this Vishnu temple, which dates back from the 12th Century, draws thousands of devotees to its annual festival. It is the center of attraction in ***Vishnu Kanchi.*** The temple is a big one with two gopurams one at the west and the other in the east.

Sri Kamakshi Ambal

Sri Varadaraja Perumal

Sri Varadaraja Perumal situated on top of Hastigiri hill. Sri Varadarjar faces west and is on an artificial hill. People go through the western entrance. The hundred pillared hall in this temple, erected during the Vijayanagar Period is renowned for its exquisite sculptures. The holy tank known as Anantha Pushkarani, Lord ***Athigiri Varadaraja*** is lying below water. It is taken out once in Forty years, exhibited for one mandalams and then replaced within the tank.



Sri Ekambaranathar Temple.

Sri Kamakoti Peetham:

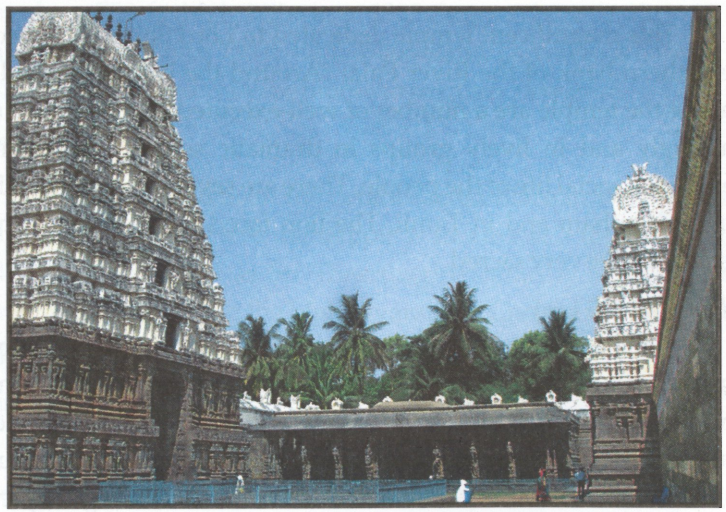
Sri Adi Sankara, after his various tours through most parts of India, settled down at Kanchi to spend His last years. He caused to remodel the city and reconstruct the three principal temples Devi Kamakshi, Sri Ekambareswarar and Sri Varadaraja Perumal. Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham was established by Sri Adi Sankara in the year 482 B.C. It has the distinction of an unbroken line of 70 Acharyas (spiritual leaders). Sri Kanchi Kamakotipeetam has been undertaking several spiritual and social activities.

Other Temples in the Town:

The city is fully packed with a lot of temples. There are a few temples which get historical and architectural importance. They are Sri Kacchapeswarar (Siva) temple, Sri Pandava Dutha Perumal (Krishna) temple, Sri Kumarakottam Subramanya Swami temple, Sri Ulagalantha Perumal (Vishnu) temple, Sri Vaikunda Perumal (Vishnu) temple, Sri Astabujaperumal temple, Sri Yathothakari Perumal temple, Sri Vilakolikathaperumal temple, and Jain Temple at Thiruparuthikundram.

Around Kanchipuram:

Sri Perumpudur (32 km), Uthiramerur (30 km), and Thiruthani (46 km).



Sri Jalagandeeswarar Temple, Vellore.

Thiruthani: (46 km)

It is one of the six abodes of Lord Muruga. The temple stands on the top of the Thanigai Hill. It is a single rock 700 feet above from sea level. His righteous indignation towards the Asuras was quelled here and so it is know as ***Shantipuri*** or Abode of peace. It is said that if Murugan is worshipped here with heart and soul for five consecutive days, the worshipper is blessed with the best in this life and after.

Vellore

(90 km from Kanchipuram)

Sri Jalagandeeswarar Temple:

This temple is very near to the bus stand. The temple stands inside the fort and is dedicated to Sri Jalagandeeswar. The temple is noted for its sculptures, and speaks volumes of the exquisite craftsmanship of the highly skilled artisans of that period. The sculpture in the porch on the left of the entrance is a masterpiece appreciated by the connoisseurs of art and architecture. It has a big wedding hall adorned with elegant reliefs and monolithic sculptures. This temple was used for long as an arsenal and remained without deity. A few years back it has been sanctified with an idol of Lord Shiva.

Virinjipuram : (19 km)

This magnificent temple dedicated to Lord Shiva is located on the southern bank of the River Palar. Around the basements and the pillars of the temple are a number of well-executed figures that can be seen singly and in lively groups in dramatic settings representing scenes in the social life of the people. There are several inscriptions here both in Grantham and in Tamil. The lion faced Simmakulam tank is considered to be very sacred.

Padavedu : (35 km)

This is now a desolate village with two important ancient temples, both of which are interesting places of pilgrimage. One is dedicated to Sri Ramachandraswamy and the other to Goddess Renukambal Amman. The temple of Sri Renukambal Amman is situated in an area of 6.29 acres. There are beautiful carvings depicting the invitation of Parasurama by Sri Renukadevi.

Thiruvalam : (12 km from Kadpadi)

Located on the western bank of the Nuga river, a tributary of Palar river, it is famous for the ancient Shiva temple dedicated to Sri Vallanadeheeswarar. Thiruvalam is praised by saint Thirugnanasambandar. A unique feature of this shrine is that the Nandhi is not facing the Lord, but facing the opposite direction. There is an under - ground path, beneath the Bali Peetam. Several stone inscriptions in both Tamil and Sanskrit could be found in the temple.

Vallimalai : (10 km from Thiurvalam)

The temple is situated in the top of a small hill that can be ascended by a flight of 300 steps. The main deity is Lord Subramanya. The temple was built about 1500 years ago. It is said that this is the place where Valli was born and married the Murugan. Most part of the temple looks like a cave on the hill.

It has been one of the important Jain Centers during the early medieval period. According to Kannada inscription the natural cavern was converted into Jain abode by Prince Rajamalla of Western Ganga dynasty in about 10th century AD.

Sholingur: (40 km)

Sholingur is famous for Sri Yoga Narashimhar temple. It is situated on 750 ft. high hillock & 1305 Stairs. There is also a Yoga Anjaneyar temple on a 350 ft. high & 406 stairs. Devotees who visit this temple on full moon day every month to perform girivalam.

Theerthamalai:

Theerthamalai is an important sacred place in Harur taluk of Dhamapuri District. Here the temple is located at a top of a hillock. Lord Siva is dedicated as Sri Theerthagiriswarar. A lot of devotees throng the temple during the Mahasivarathiri. Chola and Vijayanagara Kings donated liberally to this temple.

Hanumanthatheertham:

This place is situated on the bank of River Pennaiyar in Harur taluk of Dhamapuri District. Traditionally it is associated with Theerthamalai. It is believed that Sri Hanuman who was instructed by

Sri Yoga Narashimhar Sholingur

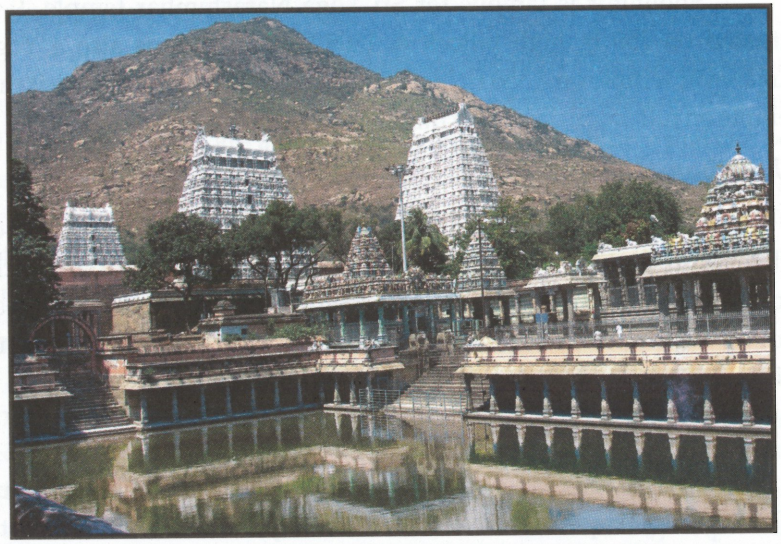
Sri Rama to get the water from the holy river Ganga for his penance at Theerthamalai which he could not do it in time.

So Sri Rama was said to have done Asthraprayogam and got it. Disappointed at this , Hanuman was said to have thrown done vessel in which he brought the holy water and this spilled water is believed to be the Hanumanthatheertham.

THIRUVANNAMALAI

(187 km from Chennai)

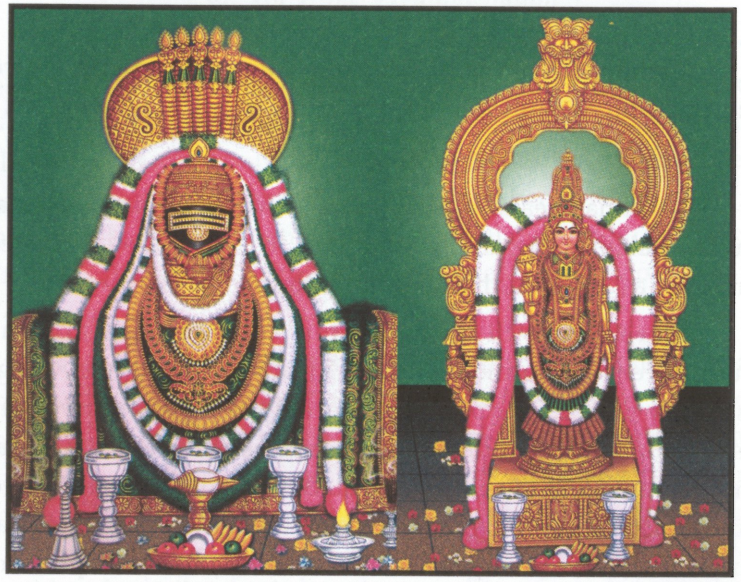
The Arunachaleshwara temple of this place is one of the largest temple in South India. Situated at the foot of a hill. It covers an area of 25 acres. The Arunachaleshwara temple is dedicated to ***Tejo Lingam*** or ***Jyothi Lingam*** (the fire incarnation of God). Hence much significance is attached to Thiruvannamalai as one of the ***Pancha Bhutha Sthalas***. The main gopuram is 200 feet and 13 storeys high. The nine imposing gopurams of the temple are a magnificent sight.



Sri Arunachaleswarar Temple, Thiruvannamalai

Legend:

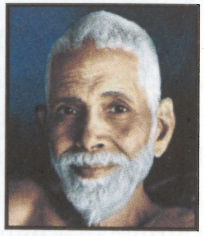
Once Brahma and Vishnu misguidedly argued about which of them was greater, and went to Lord Shiva to settled their debate. The latter appeared before them as a pillar of fire, and declared that whichever of them was able to find either his beginning or end was greater. Vishnu went downwards into the earth and Brahma flew upwards into space, but no matter how far they travelled they could not find the base or the crest of the Lingam of fire. Both lost their arrogance and bowed before Lord Shiva. The pillar of fire became the hill of Arunachala a natural Lingam.



Sri Arunachaleswarar, Sri Unnamulaiamman

Sri Ramana Maharshi Ashram:

The hill is considered as the symbol of spiritual knowledge and enlightenment. The hermitage where the silent saint Sri Ramana Maharshi lived is half way up the hill. He exerted great spiritual power on those who came in search of him. Thousands of followers visit the world-famous Sri Ramana Ashram round the year to pursue profound themes of meditation.



Sri Ramana Maharshi

Thirukkovilur: (39 km)

This Vishnu temple is situated 39 km from Thiruvannamalai. The main shrine is dedicated to ***Ulagalantha Perumal*** (Thiruvikrama Swami). Lord Vishnu in a mammoth form of Thiruvikrama dominating the three worlds, subduing Mahabali, the demon king. The stone image is 35 feet high x 24 feet wide.

This temple has two prakarams and a three-tiered Rajagopuram. The Nagatheertham tank is located opposite to the temple. There are also shrines to Aandaal and, Manavaalamaamuni.

VIRUDHACHALAM

(213 km from Chennai)

Virudhachalam is 94 Km from Thiruvannamalai, 23 from Ulundurpettai, 83 from Pondicherry and 45 from Chidamabaram.

Sri Virudhagireeswarar Temple:

Virudha means old age and Achalam means Mountain. Virudhachalam means an Old Mountain. In chaste Tamil, the place is mentioned as Thirumudhukundram in the hymns Thevaram.

Here Lord Siva dedicated as Pazhamalainathar, Virudhagireeswarar, and Ambal as Virudhambikai. Everything in this temple is Five. Five prakaras, five holy springs, five rivers, five cars, five flag posts (Kodimaram), five faces to the Lord. Generally temples are built at the ground level. But Virudhachalam temple is formed in steps as if on a mount. There are only four prakaras and four Nandhis now (bull vehicle of Lord Shiva) It is to be presumed that one Prakara and one Nandhi might have been lost due to some reasons during the past. One Nandhi is found beyond the river in the eastern side.

The 12,000 gold coins gifted by the Lord to Saint Sundarar was despatched through Manimutharu river (near by the temple) so that it could not be robbed by anybody on the way and delivered at Tiruvarur (near Thanjavur)tank safely. Virudhachalam - Thirumudhukundram is praised by the three Thevaram saints, Thirugnanasambandar, Thirunavukkarasar and Sundarar

Srimushnam: (20 km)

This temple is considered one of the eight Swayam Vyaktakshetras (self - created) of Lord Vishnu. Here Lord Vishnu is dedicated as Sri Bhuvarahaswami. The original image in marble is said to have been taken away by Krishna Deva Wodeyar of Mysore and installed it at Srirengapattinam. The front Mandapam called Purushasukara Mandapam built in the 17th century looks like a chariot with elegantly carved figures of warriors riding the horses and elephants.

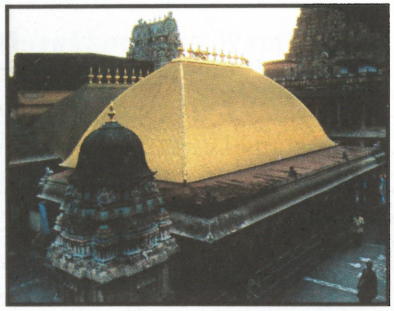
CHIDAMBARAM

(48 km from Virudhachalam)

Chidambaram is known for the famous Natraja Temple dedicated to Lord Natraj (Shiva as a cosmic dancer) and is noted for its golden roof over the sanctum sanctorum. It is an important pilgrim center and a holy place for Saivaites. It is also one of the five Shaivaite Mukti Sthalams. The other four being Kalahasthi (near Thirupathi) , Kachipuram, Thiruvannamalai and Thiruvanaikaval (Tiruchi). The temple located in the center of the town covers an area of 40 acres.

This ancient temple of the Cholas is unique not only due to the fact that it is devoted solely to the art of ***Bharthanatiyam***, but also it is one of the rare temples where Shiva is represented by an idol rather than the customary Lingam. The idol of Sri Natraja is installed in the ***Kanaka Sabha***. Though non-Hindus are not allowed inside the sanctum sanctorum. Behind Sri Nataraj, is a black screen, which is considered to cover the Aakasa Lingam. There is no Lingam, but we are made to believe that there is an invisible Lingam, with golden vilva garlands, i.e stressing the belief that there is everything in nothing. There are five silver plated steps to reach the Kanaka Sabha, representing the Panchakshara mantram - Na ma si va ya.

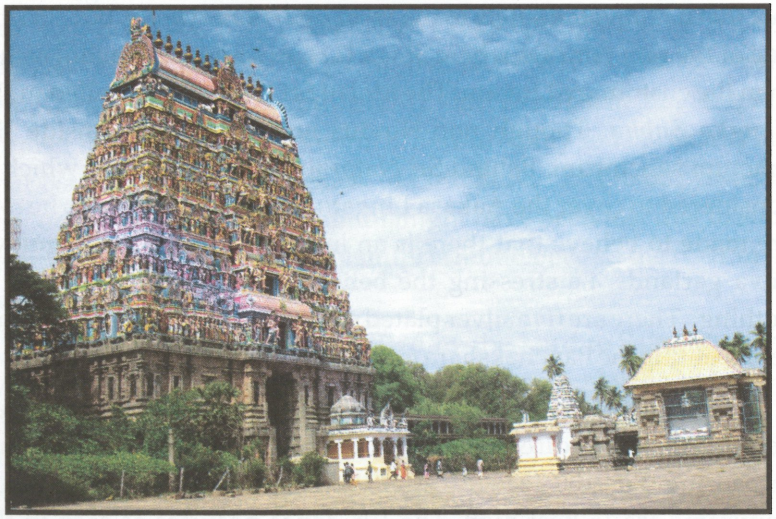
The temple is surrounded by massive walls with four big tall gopurams in four directions and a big tank called Sivagangai tank measuring 175x100 feet towards the North. The North & South gopurams are 160feet high. The 108 dance postures as seen in the Natya Sastra are sculpted in these towers. It has five principal sabhas



Kanaga Sabha

known as Kanakasabha, Chit sabha, Nritya sabha, Deva sabha and Raja sabha. The Raja sabha measuring 103 metres by 58 metres is housed in a 1000 pillared hall in the outermost prakaram. Tradition holds that Sekhizhar recited the Peria Puranam here. The sanctum of Sivakama Sundari lies to the left of Natarajar Sannidhi.

This is one of the few temples, where Shiva & Vishnu are enshrined under one roof. Near the Sanctum there is a Shrine for Vishnu called as Govindaraja, or Chitracootathullan. Legend says that Siva and Parvathi were dancing with abandon when the question of who was a better dancer came up. First they went to Brahma at Thiruvalankadu, but failed to give a verdict. Second they went to Vishnu at Thiruchitrakoodam (Chidambaram). While dancing Siva as Nataraja lifted his right leg above his head. Parvathi could not do so due modesty. Since the verdict went in favour of Siva. Thus Chidambaram was also importance to Vishnu also.



Sri Nataraj Temple, Chidambaram

Sirkazhi Siva Temple

Two annual Bhrammotsavams are celebrated. One in the month of Margazhi, during Arudra Darisanam festival and the second in the month of Aani concluding with Aani Tirumanjanam, when the deities are taken out in procession.

Sirkazhi: (17 kms)

Sirkazhi is considered to be the Tevara Stalangal located to the North of the river Kaveri. This is a vast temple complex with 3

Dharsan Pushkarani, Vaitheeswaran Kovil.

different Shiva Shrines. Three different forms of Shiva are worshipped here, the Shivalingam (Bhrammapureeswarar), a collossal image of Uma Maheswarar (Toniappar) at the upper level, and Bhairavar (Sattanathar) again at the upper level.

Goddess Parvathi gave Gnana milk to Thirugnana Sambandar here, when he was a child. After this, he sang the famous Devaram. Lord Shiva as Thoniappar resides in a thoni (boat). The boat symbolizes that Thoniappar helps people cross their sea of birth. Every year during Thiruvadirai Nakshatra of Chithirai month, the famous Thirumulaippal Utsav is held. This well maintained temple is under the able administration of the Dharumapura Adhinam. Six worship services are offered each day. Special worship services to Bhairavar (Sattanathar) are carried out on Friday nights.

Vaitheeswarar Kovil : (33 km)

This ancient temple dedicated to Lord Shiva - as Vaitheeswaran literally meaning the divine provider of cures. Adorned with imposing towers, Mandapams and pillars, this well visited shrine has been sung by the Saivite Saint Poets. It is believed that a bath in the holy waters of the Siddhamirtham tank within the temple complex will cure all diseases. It is of said that Angarakan - Mars, Kartikeya, Jatayu and the Rig Veda worshipped Shiva here. This shrine is also referred to as an Angarakasthalam.

MAYILADUTHURAI

(36 km from Chidambaram)

Sri Mayuranathaswami Temple:

This ancient Siva temple is in the heart of the town. Several Shivastalams are located in the vicinity of Mayiladuthurai. It is considered Tevara Stalams in the Chola kingdom located south of the river Cauvery. This temple has 5 prakarams, a 9 tiered (165 feet high) Raja Gopuram, pillared halls with interesting sculptural work as well as 14 vimanams with several stucco images. Inscriptions from the Imperial Chola period are found here. The temple is managed by the Tiruvavaduturai Adhinam.

Legend says that Dakshayani (Parvati) took the form of a peacock after her father's Daksha Yagnam, worshipped Shiva here. Shiva is said to have taken a peacock form, performed the Gowri Tandavam and united with her here. Mayuranathar is believed to have quelled the Kaveri floods to make way for Sambandar and 4 of the Vallalar shrines in the vicinity are said to be manifestations of Mayuranathar. Interestingly, the Tiruppariyalur Veerattam where the Dakshayagnam is believed to have been performed, is located at a distance from 8 km from this temple.

Sri Parimala Ranganathar Temple:

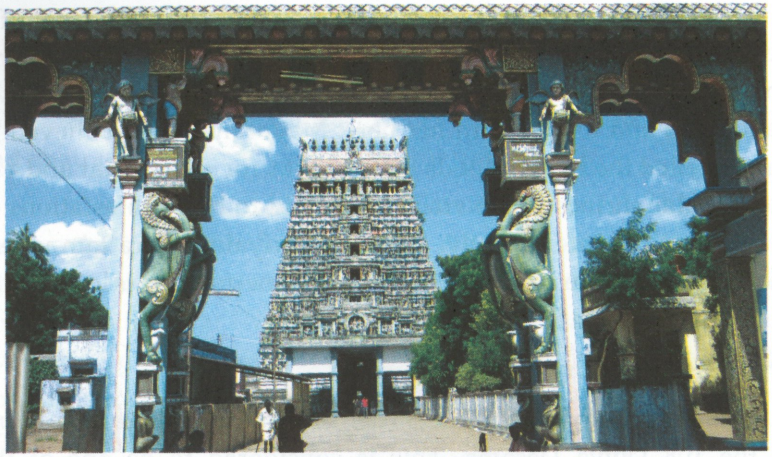
This is another temple in Mayiladuthurai. This temple is one of the 108 Divya Desams. This is considered to be one of the Pancharangams, the other four being Srirangapatnam near Mysore(Karnataka), Srirangam, Koyiladi (Anbil, Tiruchy) and Kumbhakonam. This temple with tree prakarams has a 5 tiered Rajagopuram and it faces east. The Dwajastampa mandapam and the Garuda Mandapam have beautifully sculptured pillars. The Garuda mandapam bears images of the 10 Avatarams.

The Moolavar Sri Parimala Ranganathar also known as an imposing 12 feet long image made of green stone, and Sugandhavana Nathan, in a reclining posture facing east. Taayaar here is Parimala Ranganayaki. Images of Kaveri and Ganga are seen seated in the sanctum, as is an image of Santana Gopalakrishnan. Bhrahma is seen depicted on the wall.

Thirukkadaiyur: (22 km from Mayiladuthurai)

This ancient Siva temple is on the east coast of Tamil Nadu. This is one of the holy places of Saivism today.

The prime deity worshipped in this holy place is Lord Shiva. The Amritaghateswarar and Abirami Temple in this hamlet of Thirukkadaiyur are associated with the mythical stories of Markandeya and Abirami Battar. This holy place is believed to be the place where Lord Shiva rescued and saved the Markendeya, the son of an ardent devotee of Lord Shiva, from the Yama (the God of death). Local devotees believe that Markandeya worshipped Amritaghateswarar, a form of Lord Shiva, in Thirukkadaiyur.



Sri Amritaghateswarar Temple, Thirukkadayur

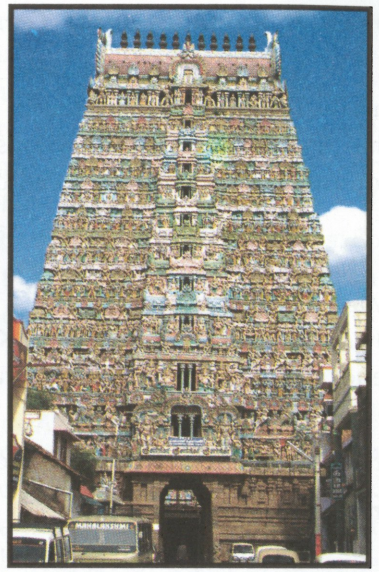
This temple town witnesses steady huge flow of witnesses coming to offer prayers to Lord Shiva and Goddess Abhirami. It is a grand temple with 5 Prakarams, imposing towers and ornate Mandapams covering an area of 11 acres. There are three temple tanks which are known to be very holy water tanks. 'Amrita Pushkarini', 'Kaala Theertham' and 'Maarkandeya Theertham'.

Around Mayiladuthurai

Vazhur Siva Temple (8 km), Koothanur Saraswathi Temple (2 km), Thiruvavaduthurai Siva Temple (16 km), Chayavanam Siva

Sri Mahamaham Tank, Kumbakonam

Sri Aadi Kumbeswarar Temple



Sri Sarangapani Temple

Temple 2km from Poompuhar, Thirumullaivasal (13 km from Sirkazhi) Kuthalam Siva temple (10 km), Thirumanacheri (5 km from Kuthalam) Chempanaar Kovil Siva Temple (12 km).

KUMBAKONAM

(32 km from Mayiladuthurai)

Kumbakonam is considered one of the seven important holy cities of India. It is believed that a both Mahamaham Tank on Mahamaham day will cleanse one of the sins. The Mahamaham festival is celebrated here once in 12 years in the month of Masi (Feb-March), when Jupiter passes through the sign of leo the devotees believe that the nine sacred rivers of India appear in this tank on the Mahamaham day. The four large temples Sri Adi Kumbeshwara Temple, Sri Sarangapani Temple, Sri Ramaswami Temple and Sri Nageshwara Temple, located here are noted for sculptures and carvings.

Sri Aadi Kumbeswarar, Sri Mangalambhikai

In the 7th Century it was the Capital of Chola Kings. It is picturesquely located amidst the two rivers, Cauvery & Arasalar.

Sri Aadi Kumbheswarar Temple:

Sri Aadi Kumbheswarar Temple is the major one among the Saivite Temples. It is located in the center of Kumbakonam town. This temple has three Praharas and three Gopurams. The East Gopuram consists of 9 stories with a height of 128 feet.

The presiding deity is 'Aadikumbheswarar' and His consort is 'Mangalambhika'. It is also one of the 51 Saktibeeta sthala (Mantrabheta sthala). The Siva Linga is slightly tilted at the top towards left and hence the name Kumbakonam (kumba - pot;konam - bend) and the deity is Kumbeshwarar.

The Saivaite Saints, Appar and Sambandhar have sung in praise of the Presiding Deities of the temple.

Sri Sarangapani Temple:

This temple is considered one among the three major shrines of Lord Vishnu and this temple is given the third place next to Srirangam and Tirupathi. It was renovated during the period of Naicks of 15th Century. The Karuvarai and Vimanam are made with twelve sculptured columns shaped like a chariot. This temple consists of the biggest Gopuram height 150 feet and 5 Prakharams and one holy tank called Golden Lotus Tank and also known as Lakshmi Theertham. Goddes Lakshmi performed penance here and Vishnu came down as Aravamudhan and married here.

Sri Nageswara Temple:

This temple is located near the old bus stand area and Adithya Cholan of Chola dynasty constructed the temple during 12th Century. This temple stands as a great marvel of Chola's architecture, building technology and astronomy.

Adi Sesha and Surya had worshiped Sri Nageswara here. When Adi Sesha was groaning under the weight of the world, he came to who win Kuvinvanam, the present of Nageswara Temple and did penance. Siva and Parvathi appeared before Adi Sesha and blessed him with enough strength. The Sun's rays fall on the lingam in the central shrine through an opening in the eastern tower for three days in a year - on the 11th,12th and 13th days in the month of Chithirai (April - May).

Sri Ramaswami Temple:

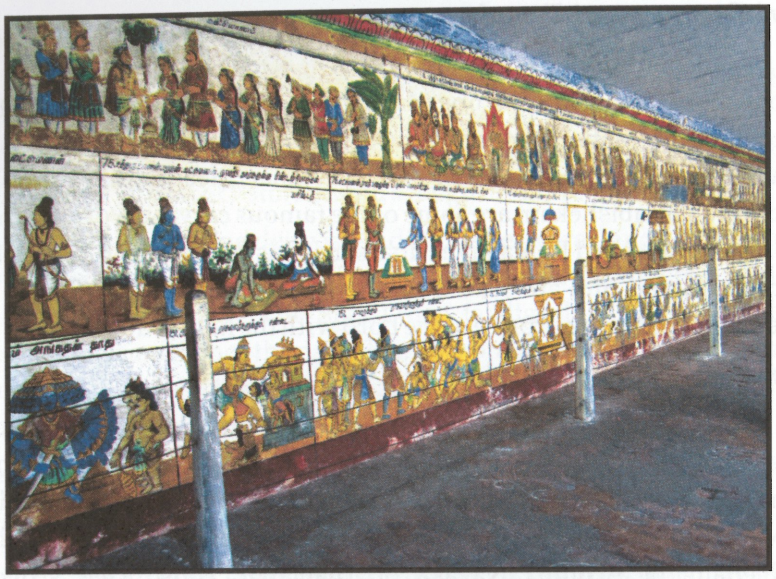
This temple is near to Sri Adi Kumbeswarar temple. It consists of one Gopuram, one Maha mandapam and Karuvarai. The columns of Maha mandapam are enriched with intricate stone carving works of Rama-katha, Vaman avathar, Meenakshi Wedding, Sukriva Pattabishekam are some of the famous carving works of this temple. Here Lord Rama gives dharsan in his coronation robes. Both Sri Rama and Sita are seated on the same Peeta and Hanuman is depicted as singing in price of the Lord with the help of a Veena.

Sri Mahamaham Temples:

The famous Mahamaham Tank of Kumbakonam is located near the Head Post Office. This tank covers an area of 6.2 acres and is in a shape of a pot. The tank is Surrounded by 16 small Mandapams and a "Nava Kannika Temple" in the Eastern Side. Govinda Theekshitan, the Chieftain, of Achutha Nayaka of Thanjavur, constructed sixteen Mandapams and stone steps around this tank. Brahmatheerthesar, Mukunthar, Thalesar, Rishakesar, Umaipakesar, Nairuthesar, Brahmeesar, Gangatheerthesar and Seshtra Paleesar, are the names of deities located in these Mandapams.

Brahmatheerthesar temple is located at the Northwestern portion of this tank. This temple is also known as "Thula Mandapam" where a big physical balance is provided for making contribution to the temple. It is also believed that this tank consists of 19 Holy Theerthams around the tank periphery and another theertham at the centre. Vayu, Ganga, Brahma, Yamuna, Kubera, Gothavarai, Esaniam, Narmadha, Indra, Saraswathi, Akni, Cauvery, Nagam, Niruthi, Palaru, Thevan, Varunan, Saratu and Kannia are names of the Theerthams believed to be located inside this tank. Apart from the above said Mandapams, around the tank area, a temple known as Abimukeshar Kovil occupies the eastern portion of the tank Kasi Vishwanathar Kovil situated on the northern bank of Mahamaham Tank and the temple and the big Gopuram in the front were constructed during the period of Naick rule.

During this festival it is believed that in Mahamaham tank the famous rivers like the Ganga, the Yamuna, etc... meet together and taking bath in Mahamaham, would wash off all the sins.

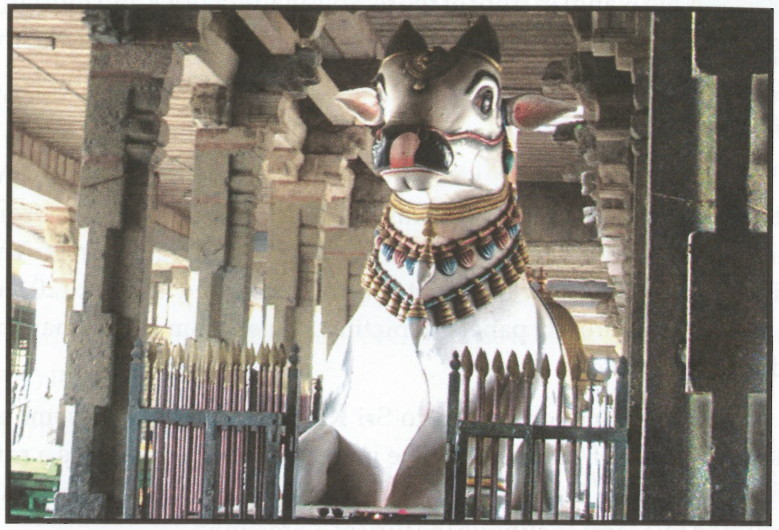


Paintings at Sri Ramaswami Temple, Kumbakonam.

Other Temples in the Town:

Sri Chakrapani temple, Sri Kasi Viswanatha temple, Sri Someswara temple, Sri Somanatha temple, Sri Gautameswara temple, Sri Vedaranya Perumal Temple and Sri Brahma Temple.

Gangaikonda Cholapuram Temple



Maha Nandhi, Thiruvidaimaruthur Temple.

Around Kumbakonam

GangaiKonda Cholapuram: (42 km)

This historical temple is 42 km from Kumbakonam towards Chennai.The Brihadeeswarar temple at Gangaikonda Cholapuram was conceived and constructed by the Chola King Rajendra-I after his victory over the kingdoms bordering the river Ganga Siva. This temple looks similar to the Thanjavur Big temple. The sculptures of Chandeswarar and Gnanasaraswathi are very fine workmanship.

Sri Garuda, Nachiyarkovil

Sri Uppiliappan

A big Nandi in front of the temple made of brick and mortar, a lion head well with a flight of steps leading to the water level and the gigantic dwarapalakas are the other special features of this temple.

Thirupuvanam: (6 km)

This Siva temple was built by Chola King Thirupuvana Chakravarthi as a memorial to his conquest in the North. The front mandapam here is again built in the form of a huge chariot. The Vimanam here is larger than that of Darasuram, and is about 120 feet in height. Sculptured panels depicting scenes from the Ramayana adorn this temple.

The shrine, dedicated to Sri Kampahareswarar, resembles the Big temple of Thanjavur. The image of Sarabheswarar is a rare sculpture with a strange combination of bird and man. Lord Siva assumed this form to subdue the fury of Narasimha.

Thiruvidai Maruthur: (8 km)

This place is about 2 km from Thirupuvanam temple . The River Cauvery passes through this village. The village is also called Madhyarjunam and the Presiding deity is Mahalingeswarar and goddess is known as Perunamulaiyammai. Legend says that Shiva was worshipped by Saraswathi, Lakshmi, Kaali, the Vedas, Vasishtar, Skanda, Vishnu and Agastya.

Uppiliappan Kovil : (6 km)

This sacred Vaishnavite temple exists known as Uppiliappan or Oppiliappan temple. The deity is known by various names as Uppiliappan, Oppiliappan, Srinivasan, Venkatachala- pathy, Tiruvinnagarappan, etc. The Goddess is known as Bhoomi Devi. This is one of the sacred 108 Divyadesam.

The Lord is in the standing pose facing east, Goddess Bhoomi Devi sitting facing north, and Markandeya is installed as if performing the rites of marriage of his daughter. Poigai Alwar, Pey Alwar, Tirumangai Alwar and Nammalwar have sung in praise of this deity. As Nammalwar Yisualised the God of this temple in five different poses, he began to call the deity accordingly as Ponnappan, Maniappan, Muthappan, Ennappan and Tiruvinnagarappan.

Nachiyar Kovil: (10 km from Kumbakonam)

This beautiful Vishnu shrine is dedicated to Srinivasa Perumal. Here the Garuda Vahanam is made of stone, which is rare. The divine consort is Nachiyar or Vanulavalli Thayar. It is the birth place of Nambi Andar Nambi. Among the important festivals are Thirukalyanam (Holy Marriage) in Aug- Sep, Mukkodi Utsavam in Dec- Jan, and Brahmotsavam in Mar - Apr.

The main feature of Mukkodi Utsavam is the Garuda Seva on the 4th day when the stone idol of Garuda is taken out in a procession carrying Srinivasa Perumal.

Darasuram: (4 km)

This temple is 4 km from Kumbakonam towards Thanjavur. The Airateswara temple built by Rajendra Chola in 12th Century A D. It is an great example of Chola architecture. Legend says that *Airavata*, the white elephant of Indra, and Yama, the God of Death, had worshiped Lord Siva here. The frontal columns of the temple have unique miniature sculptures. There is a tank called Yama Theertham. Darasuram is described as a sculptor's dream re-lived in stone. The front mandapam itself is in the form of a huge chariot drawn by horses.

Patteswaram : (8 km)

Here Lord Siva was worshipped by Patti, one of the daughters of Kamadhenu. The Lord is known as Dhenupureeswarar and Godess is gnanambikai. Here Lord Siva gave a canopy of pearls to Saivite saint Gnana Sambandhar on a hot summer day and made the Nandhi to move aside to see His devotee enter the shrine.

Goddess Durgai Amman is enshrined on the northern side of the temple and every Friday is special to worship the goddess. Buses are available from Kumbakonam.

Swamimalai: (8 km)

Swamimalai is one of the Aru Padai Veedu (Six abodes) of Lord Muruga. The temple is 8 km west of Kumabakonam towards Thirvaiyaru on the banks of river Cauvery. A flight of 60 steps, each

Sri Airawatheswarar Temple, Darasuram.

representing a Tamil year, leads one to top. It is here that Lord Muruga, the son, expounded the meaning of *Om*, the Pranava Mantra, to Lord Siva, the father.

Papanasam: (14 km)

There are two temples; The Pallaivanatha Swami temple constructed by the Chola King and the other is the Ranganathaswami temple or 108 Sivalayam temples is situated on the southern bank of River Kudamurutti. The Godess is Parvathavardhini. Legend has it

108 Siva Temple, Papanasam.

that Sri Rama had installed the 108 Lingams to expiate the sin of killing the demons Khara and Dhushana. Hence the name of this place.

There are also a Granary (storehouse of paddy) which measure 86 feet in width and has a height of 36 feet with a capacity of 3,000 kalam which is a measure. The Nayaks between 1600-1634 constructed it. The State Archaeological Department declared it as a monument. One can see the 108 Sivalingams only in the temple in Papanasam.

Thirukarugavoor: (20 km, 5 km from papanasam)

This temple is situated in the riverbed of River Vettaru a branch of the Cauvery, at a distance of 5 km from Papanasam.

The Siva Shrine is dedicated to Sri Mullaivananathar. Godess Garbarakshambigai is said to offer protection to human embryo. Women pray here for safe pregnancy and delivery. This sthalam Thirukarugavoor is ancient and has been extensively quoted by the Great Shaivite saints Thirugnana Sambandar and Thirunavukkarasar on the dieties Eswara Mullaivananathar and the Goddesses Gharbharakshambigai.

Sri Mullaivananathar Temple, Thirukkarugavur.

Other Shrines:

Aaduthurai Siva Temple (15 km), Thirumangalakkudi Siva Temple (3 km from Aaduthurai), Thirvaikkavur (7 km from Swamimalai), Aavoor Siva temple (7 km from Pateeswaram), Thiruvalanchuli Ganesh Temple (7 km), Thirunaraiyur Siva temple (Near Nachiyar Kovil), Sivapuram (5 km), Marudanallur Siva Temple (6 km).

NAVAGRAHA STHALAS

In Tamilnadu Navagraha temples are located within a 60 km. radius around Kumbakonam. Six of them are situated on the northern bank of Cauvery and three on the southern bank.

Suryanar Kovil: (15 km from Kumbakonam)

This is the only temple in South India dedicated exclusively to ***Surya (Sun God)***. Surya is know as the giver of health, success and prosperity. It is built by King Kulothunga Cholo I in 1100 A D. Every year in mid January, the harvest festival is celebrated in thanks giving and to honor Surya.

Thingaloor Kovil: (Chandran Sthalam, 5 km from Thirvaiyaru)

Dedicated to the ***Moon or Chandran*** in Sanskrit and ***Thingal*** in Tamil, a visit to this temple is said to grant a comfortable and long life. In the months of Purattasi (Sep-Oct) and Panguni (Mar-Apr),Moon's rays fall on the Lingam. In astrology, Chandran is the planet that removes stress and sorrow.

Vaitheeswaran Kovil: (Ankarakan Sthalam, 6 km from Sirkazhi)

The presiding deity is Sri Vaidyanathaswamy, is hailed as the healer of all ills. The belief is that if prayers are offered to ***Ankarakan,*** he will bestow valour, victory and strength to the person. Jatayu, Muruga, and Surya worshipped the Lord here.There is also a widespread belief that a visit here would remove obstacles that delay marriage.

Thiruvenkadu: (Budhan Sthalam, 10 km from Vaitheeswarankovil

The Siva shrine here is dedicated to Sri Swetaranyeswara. The Goddess is Brahma Vidyambika.There is a reference to this

temple in Valmiki's ***Ramayana***. Therefore it is said that the oldest part of the temple is more than 3000 years old. Dedicated to ***Budhan*** or ***Mercury*** this temple in Thiruvenkadu makes up the last of the Navagraha Temples. Budhan is said to bestow wisdom and intellect.

Alangudi: (Guru sthalam, 18 km from Kumbakonam)

The presiding deity here is Sri Aabathsagayeswara or Aranyeswara, a Swayambu Lingam, and the Goddess is Umai Ammai.This is regarded as a ***Guru sthalam*** or Jupiter where Lord Dakshinamurthy is held in great reverence. Parvati, the consort of Lord Shiva, is said to have been reborn on the banks of the Amrita Pushkarini within the temple precincts before being reunited with Shiva.

Kanchanoor: (Sukran Sthalam, 3km from Suryanar temple)

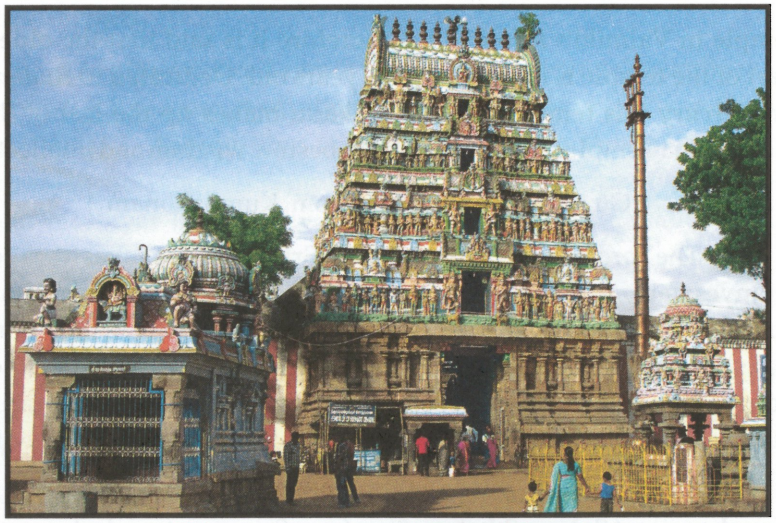
This Shiva sthalam is associated with ***Sukran*** or Venus. This shrine is also referred to as Palaasavanam, Brahmapurai and Agnisthalam. Brahma is said to have had a vision here of Shiva's wedding with Parvati. Men visit to pray for the well being of their wives.

Thirunallar: (Sani Sthalam, 5 km from Karaikal , 53 km from Kumbakonam)

This is the only temple that is dedicated to Lord ***Sani*** or ***Saturn***. When the planet Saturn transits between zodiac signs, literally millions throng this shrine. The legendary ***King Nala*** is said to have been relieved of his afflictions, which were due to the malefic influence of Saturn, after worship in this temple. Of the numerous tanks theertams, the ***Nala theertam*** is the most important one. By bathing here, it is believed that one is washed off all kinds of misfortune and afflictions.

Thirunageswaram: (Rahu Sthalam, 5 km from Kumbakonam)

The Siva shrine is dedicated to Sri Naganathaswamy, his consort is Giri Gujambika.This vast temple known is for its shrine to ***Rahu***, one of the nine celestial bodies in the Navagraha. A legend has it that the mythological serpents Adiseshan, Dakshan and Kaarkotakan worshipped Shiva here.



Thirunageswaram (Ragu)Temple

Keezha Perumpallam: (Kethu Sthalam, 2 km from Poompuhar)

This is an ancient Shaivite temple and legend has it that ***Kethu,*** the other planetary node of the nine celestial bodies worshipped Shiva here. Rahu and Kethu are associated with the legend of the serpent that helped Lord Shiva churn the milky ocean. There is a shrine dedicated to Kethu in this temple.

Sri Brihadeswarar Temple, Thanj...ur.

THANJAVUR

(38 km from Kumbakonam, 60 km from Tiruchi)

Thanjavur derives its name from Tanjan-an asura (giant), who according to local legend devastated the neighborhood and was killed by Sri Anandavalli Amman and Vishnu, Sri Neelamegapperumal. Tanjan's last request that the city might be named after him was granted.

The district of Thanjavur boast of hundreds of ancient temples. The town of Thanjavur was seat of the glorious Chola Empire of Tamilnadu, and was later of the Naicks and the Marathas.

Sri Brihadeeswarar Temple:

This 1000 years old temple is near to the old bus stand. It is one of the best and biggest temple in South India. It was built by The Chola emperor Raja Raja in 985 to 1013 A D. The architecture of the temple is the final evolution of Dravidian sensibility in its blend of engineering and design. The construction is unique: the *Vimanam,* know as *Dhakshina Meru,* soars high while the Gopurams remains stunted.

Sri Brihadeeswarar, Sri Periyanayagi, Thanjavur.

The temple stands within a fort, whose walls are later additions built in 16th century. The Dhakshina Meru Vimanam is 64.8 mtrs tall, with14 tiered . The octagonal *Shikharam* rests on a single block of granite weighing 81.3 tones. Sri Brihadeeswarar is a gigantic Lingam (about 8.7 meters high).

There is a massive ***Nandi*** at the portals of the temple. It is the second largest monolithic Nandi in the country. Measuring 6mtr in length, 2.6 mtr in breath and 3.7 mtr in height .The divine consort, Brahannayaki, or Periyanayaki is in a separate shrine. The shrine of Lord Subramanya is an exquisite piece of decorative art.

Thiruvaiyaru: (13 kms)

Situated on the banks of the river Cauvery Thiruvaiyaru has an old Shiva temple dedicated to Panchanatheswar. Though pilgrims flock to this temple throughout the year. Thiruvaiyaru is more renowned for its anociation with saint Thyagaraja, who along with Muthuswami Diskshitar and Shyama Sastri, Comprises the trinity of Carnatic Music. Near Shiva Temple is the one - roomed have where Thyagaraja composed some of this greatest works.

On the banks of the river is the samadhi of the saint and it is here that the greatest music festival in the country takes place annually. The Thyagaraja Aaradhana festival is held in January when most of the leading exponents of carnatic music come to perform and are watched by thousands of ardent fame of classical music.

Thiruvarur:(55kms)

The Thyagarajaswami temple here has the biggest temple chariot in Tamil Nadu. This vast temple houses Thyagaraja, Kamalamba and Vanmikanathar and has been sung by the Saiva Saints. The pillars and the halls here are of great beauty. Rajaraja Cholan was an ardent devotee of Thyagarajaswami. This temple is also referred to as a Prithvi (Earth) Sthalam.

It is considered to be one of the holiest of the 275 Saivite shrines. It has the most number of hymns in the Tirumurai collection after Sirkazhi and is the foremost of the 7 Saptavitanka shrines associated with the legend of Muchukunda Cholan and Indra. The

evening worship service here is of great significance. Tiruvarur is regarded as the 87th in the series of Tevara Stalams in Chola Nadu south of the river Cauvery.

Sri Thyagarajaswami Car Festival is celebrated in March April, every year. This is the birthplace of Saint Thyagaraja, the poet-saint and composer of Carnatic music.

Sikkal Singaravelavar Temple: (80 Km)

Around 80 Km from Thanjavur situated in Nagapattinam Tiruvarur Main Road. The ancient history says here only Lord Murugan got the 'Sakthi Vel' from Parvathi (refered as Velnedunkanni amman in this temple) and killed Suran. This temple is one of the few temples in Tamilnadu, which has both Siva and Vishnu in the same campus. The 'Vel vankuthal' festival in the Tamil month of Iyappasi is very famous here.

Nagapattinam: (25 km from Thiruvarur)

This Siva temple is dedicated to Karayogaswami and Neelayadakshi. It is considered to be the Tevara Stalams in the Chola kingdom located south of the river Kaveri. This temple also regarded as one of the 51 Shakti Peethams of India. Lord Thyagaraja is known here as Sundara Vidanagar and He performs Paaraavaaru Tharanga Natanam. The intricate workmanship of Panchamukha Vinayaka seated on a lion is noteworthy.

Vedaranyam: (52 km from Nagapattinam)

The four Vedas - Rig , Yajur, Sama, and Atharvana - worshipped Lord Vedaranyeswara (Siva) . Hence the place is known as Thirumaraikkadu. The shrine of Thyagaraja is adjacent to that of Vedaranyeswara. The Maragatha Lingam enshrined near the Thyagaraja shrine is known as Bhuvani Vidangar and his dance is Hamsa Paada Natanam.

Appar and Sundarar competed to sing and show their talents at this place. 11 Tamil songs to open the gates of the temple happened here. Because of the curse which happened during that time, still now most of the people use the back door to enter the temple.

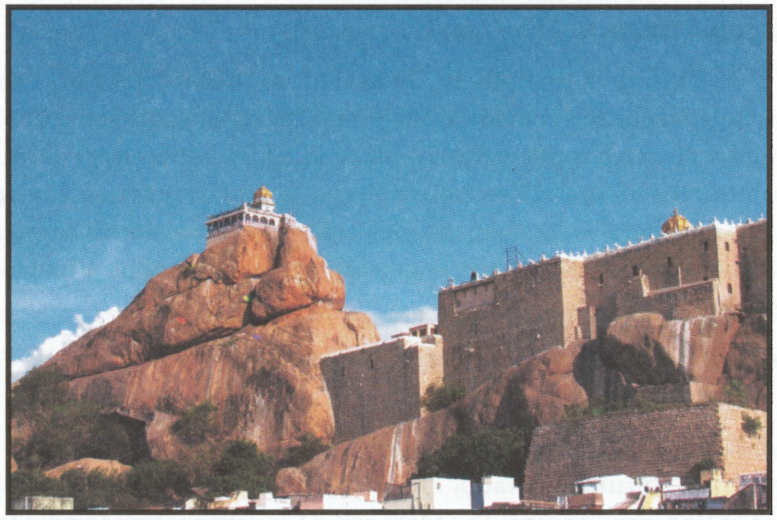
THIRUCHIRAPALLI

(320 km from Chennai)

Thiruchirapalli situated on the banks of the river Cauvery. It was originally know as Tirusirappalli, named after the three-headed Asura Tirusiras, who obtained a boon after worshipping Siva here. It lies 320km to the south of Chennai. It is the fourth largest city in the state of Tamil Nadu.

Rock Fort Temples:

The Rock Fort temple complex is a collection three temples. The Manikka Vinayaka temple at the foot of the hill, the Uchi Pillayar at the top of the hill and the Thayumanavar or Mathurubutheswarar (Siva Temple) on the hill. Atop the rock is the Uchipillayar is dedicated to Lord Ganesh from one can enjoy a panoramic view of Thiruchi.



Rock Fort Temples, Tiruchi

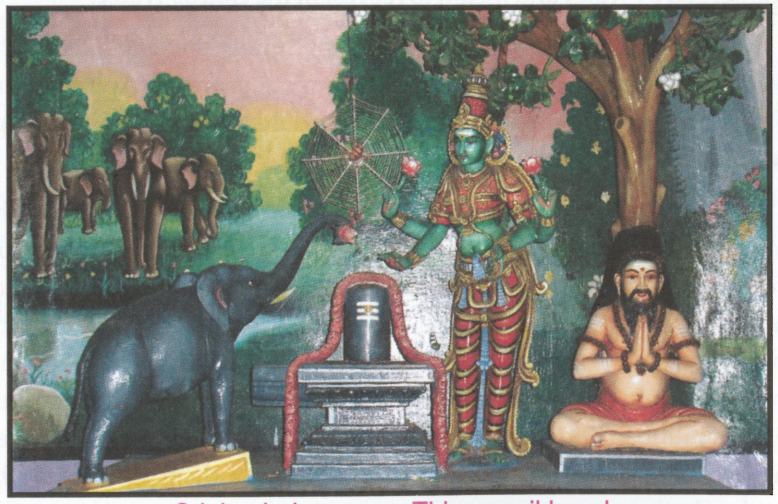
Sri Rangam Sri Ranganathaswami Temple: (8 km)

Srirangam, surrounded by waters of the river Cauvery on one side and its tributary Kollidam on other side, is a 600 acre island town enclosed within the seven rampart walls of the gigantic Sri Ranganathaswamy temple. It is considered the first and foremost

Sri Ranganathar, Srirangam

and most important of the 108 Divyadesams. There are 21 magnificent towers in all prakaras providing a unique sight to any visitor.

Srirangam is called as " ***Boologa Vaikuntam*** ". Even after many invasion by Moghal kings, this temple still stands without losing its beauty and fame. Sri Ranganathar is the main God of this temple and Sri Ranganayaki is the Goddess.



Sri Jambukeswarar, Thiruvanaikkaval

Around 1300 years ago, during the ***Bhakthi*** movement, the Alwar saint poets of Tamilnadu sang verses in praise of Lord Vishnu. 108 of these shrines and mythological abodes are collectively known as the Divyadesams shrines in the Vaishnava tradition. Except Mathurakavi Alwar, all the other eleven Alwars have done Mangalasasanam in Srirangam.

Legend:

Sri Ranganathaswami was worshiped by Brahma. He presented to Indra king of Devas and he presented to Surya. And Surya Vamsa Ikshavaku kings(ancestors of Rama) worshiped Sri Ranganathaswami. At the time of Rama's Pattabhisheka, Vibhishana obtained the Ranga Vimana (a special chariot-like conveyance carried by Veda Murtis with Vishnu inside) from Rama as a gift. While carrying it to Srilanka Vibhishana halted at Srirangam. Contrary to the injunction he had received. Vibhishana placed it on the ground and it got rooted here.

Thiruvanaikkaval Sri Jambukeswarar Temple:

It is situated 5 km from Tiruchi and 2 km east of Srirangam. This beautiful Shiva temple steals the show from the larger Ranganathaswami temple because of its excellent architectural design. Installed under an ancient Jambu tree, the lingam is partially submerged by water and meant to represent the God as Water.

Apas, the water element has great fluidity and is related to the story of Goddess Parvati creating a lingam out of water (Appulingam) after she had been banished to earth by LordShiva for mocking his Yoga Sadhana.

Legend has it that two devotees of Shiva were born under the influence of a curse as a elephant and a spider. The elephant worshipped Shiva with flowers and water brought in its trunk (hence the name Tiru Aanaikka). The spider worshipped the Lingam by spinning a web on top, to protect it from falling leaves. The elephants worship would destroy the spiders web, and the spiders web amounted to desecration in the trunk of the elephant leading to animosity between the two, of such proportion that a fight between them resulted in the death of both.

Temple Structure:

The temple has five enclosures and the walls reach a height of 35 feet. Numerous sculptures of rare beauty could not be found everywhere in the temple. It has many mantapams, Unjal mantapam, Hundred pillared mantapam, Thousand pillared mantapam, Vasantha mantapam Navaratri mantapam, and Somaskandar mantapam. The sanctum was built by Ko-Chengat-Cholan, while the walls of second Prakara was by Vijayalayam and the third Prakara was built by Vikrama Cholan. The east tower in the fourth Prakara was erected by Sundara Pandian.

Samayapuram Sri Mariamman Temple (20km):

Samayapuram Sri Mariamman temple is 20km from Tiruchi. Mariamman is a form of Shakti worshipped in Tamilnadu, and is associated with prosperity and health. When devotees are infected with chicken pox, they pray to this goddess for relief ,who relief, who immediately comes to rescue of the aching devotees.

Uraiyur: (2 km from Rock Fort)

Uraiyur was the ancient capital of the early Cholas and the ancient city is believed to have been destroyed by a sand storm. Ko-Chengat-Cholan the builder of 78 Maadakkovils is said to have born here. Just 2 km from Rock fort. In Uraiyur there are three main temples, they are Sri Nachiyar temple(Diviya Desam), Sri Panchavarneswarar temple, Sri Vekkali Amman temple.

Other Shrines:

Vayalur Sri Subramanyar temple (8 Km), Sri Uthamar Temple (8 km), Gunaseelam Sri Prasanna Venkateswarar Temple (24 km), Thirupannilee Sri Neelivananathar Siva Temple (20), Theruvellarai Vishnu Temple (27 Km) Thiruppattur Sri Brahmapureeswarar Siva Temple (30 km).

COIMBATORE

(532 km from Chennai)

The third largest city of Tamilnadu, It is one of the most industrialised cities in Tamilnadu. Coimbatore existed even prior to the second century A D. as the capital of a small tribal village

Kongunad, until it was brought under Chola control in the 2nd - 3rd century by Karikala Cholan, the first of the early Cholas.

Perur Patteeswarar Temple: (7 km)

This Siva temple is situated 7 km west of Coimbatore near river Noyyal. . The presiding deity of this temple is know as Patteeswarar and his consort Parvathi is know as Pachainayaki. The temple was built by King Karikala Cholan over 1500 years ago. It is one of the six Thandava Sthalam, here the Lord performed Ananda Thandavam.

Sri Patteeswarar, Sri Pachainayaki

This sanctum is the joint effort of the Chola, Hoysala and Vijayanagara rulers during their reign. The greatest attraction of the temple is the 'Kanaka Saba' or the golden hall which is adorned by a gold plated statue of Nataraja bestowing blessings upon the two sages - Gowmuni and Pattimuni. The gopurams and pillars of the hall are exquisitely carved out sculptures highlighting Dravidian architecture.The significance of Perur temple in earlier days are unfolded in the poetic creations of Arunagiri Nather and Kachiappa Munivar. The temple stands on the banks of the holy river Noyyal called 'Kanchi Manadi' by the locals. Pilgrims from all over visit this spot to pay homage to their ancestors

Marudhamalai Murugan Temple: (20 km)

This is a small natural hill lying to the west of Coimbatore. More than 800 years old, the presiding deity is Lord Subramaniaswami. The temple dedicated to Lord Murugan is at a height of 600 feet from the foot of the hill. The flight of steps are interspread with attractive mandapams. Though shorn of all sculptural and architectural glories, the hilly background of this

Marudhamalai Murugan Temple

temple compensates for their absence and makes it an attractive picnic spot even from the point of view of an holiday-maker.

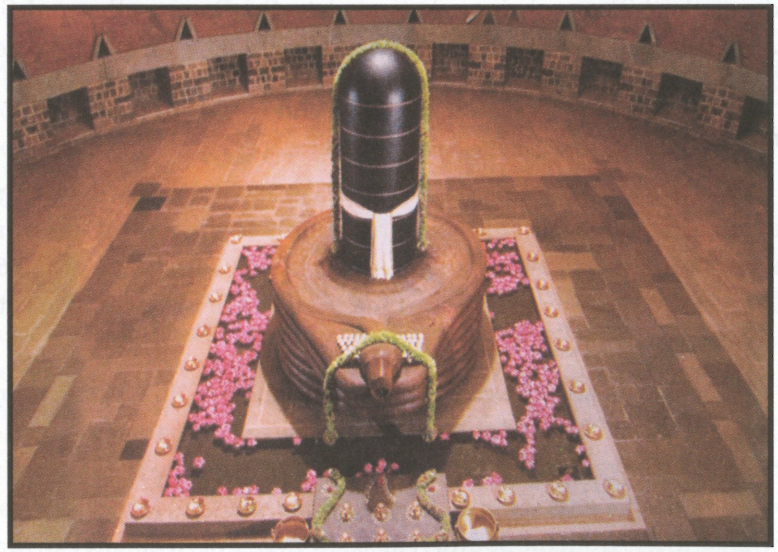
Velliangiri Hills: (30 km)

These mountains are known as the kailash of the south. Located in the outskirts of Coimbatore, it is one of the sacred hills. Lakhs of people undertake the arduous 8 km trek during Maha Sivarathri and Chitra Pournami every year. Rare medicinal herbs can be found on these mountains. The exotic flora and fauna add to the mystical colors of the pilgrimage.

Dhyanalinga: (30 km)

This is the largest lingam in the world and it is located in the foothills of the Velliangiri mountain about 30 km from Coimbatore. The lingam is a single black granite stone 13 ft.9 inches in height and it has with seven copper rings embedded in it, corresponding to the seven charkas that is believed to govern the human body. The Avudaiyar or its base is made from a single white granite stone 9 ft in diameter and is in the form of a seven headed coiled snake.

The Dhyanalinga does not ascribe to any particular religion



Dhyanalingam

or faith, but is the distilled essence of yogic science. The dome has been built with traditional material like burnt bricks, mud and mortar and additional herbal additional herbal additives.

Around Coimbatore:

Avinashilingeswarar temple (40 km), Bannari Amman temple (83 km), Masaniyamman temple at Pollachi (40 km), Ammanalingeswarar temple at Thirumoorthy hill (21 km from Udumalapet).

Bhavani: (14 km from Erode)

The Sangameshwar temple at Bhavani is situated at the confluence of the rivers Bhavani and the Cauvery. This place is called ***Thiruveni*** of South India. It is an important pilgrim center. Lord Sangameshwarar with his consort Vedanayaki is presiding deity.

Namakkal:

Namakkal is also called as "Namagiri", meaning the rock formation at the center of the town. Namakkal is well known for its temples and other sacred sites. The 7th century rock-cut temples on a hill know as Namagiri are popular among Vaishnavites. On other side of the hill are shrines dedicated to Sri Ranganatha and Sri Narshimaha. Before proceeding to the Narashimha shrine, devotees worship a majestic image of Lord Hanuman.

Tiruchengode : (42 km from Salem)

This Siva temple is regarded as Tevara Stalams in the Kongu Region of Tamilnadu. This beautiful temple is situated 24 km from Salem. Lord Siva is dedicated as Ardhanareeswarar - one of the 64 manifestations of Shiva, representing the unity of Shiva and Parvati, is enshrined in this revered hill temple.

This is an ancient temple mentioned in the Tamil work Silappadikaram . The red color of the hill caused the name Chengode. The image above, shows the view of the surrounding area from the top of the Tiruchengode hill. Although the sanctum faces the West, entrance to it is from the South. A majestic image of Ardanareeswarar adorns the sanctum.

PALANI

(110 km from Coimbatore)

This hill temple is one of the Arupadai Veedu (six abodes) of Lord Muruga. This ancient temple was built in the 7th Century A D. by King Cheman Perumal and was later added to by the Naicks. It is located at an elevation of 1500 feet above sea level can be reached by climbing 659 steps or by using electrical winch.

In the sanctum, the Lord stands as an young ascetic holding Dhanda (staff). Hence he is know as Bala Dhandayudhapani. Siddha ***Bhogar*** skillfully crafted the deity out of an amalgam of nine minerals popularly called ***Navabashna.*** It is one of the major pilgrim center in South India.

According to a legend, Muruga lost in a contest with His brother Vinayaka over a rare mango. He left Kailash in a huff and came down to this hill. Here, Lord Shiva pacified Him by saying that He Himself is the embodiment of Gyana (Knowledge). The Lord from then on came to be known as Palani Murugan or Palani Andavar.

THENI

(75 km from Madurai)

Theni district is the main route for tourist bound from Madurai to Kochi via Bodinayakanur and Munnar. Theni district holds Nature's beauty with the Spicy Green Ornaments, Historical Temples and famous water falls.

Periyakulam Balasubramanya Temple: (17 km)

Sri Balasubramanya temple was constructed by King Rajendra Chola nearly 2000 years ago. This temple is constructed equal to Varnasi (Kasi). Since Brahma theertha runs in this river it is believed that any incurable disease is cured when we have a bath in this water.

Kuchanur Sri Saneeswarar Temple: (20 km)

Kuchanur temple is exclusively for Sani Baghwan next to Thirunallar. A very sacred place for relief from the adverse effects of Saturn.

Around Theni:

Veerapandi Gowmariamman temple (8 km), Mavoothu Vellappar temple(20 km from Aandippatti), Chinnamanur Sivagamaiamman temple (28 km), Devadanapatti Kamakshi Amman temple (19 km).

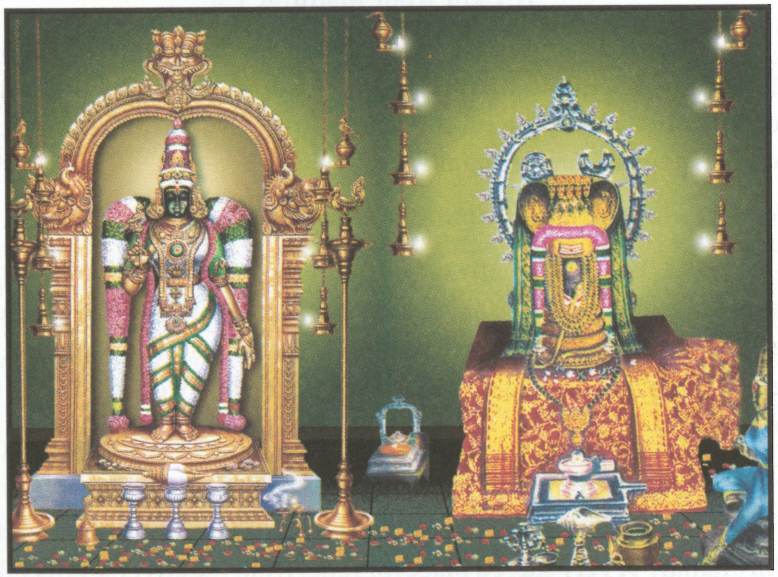
MADURAI

(140 km from Thiruchirapalli)

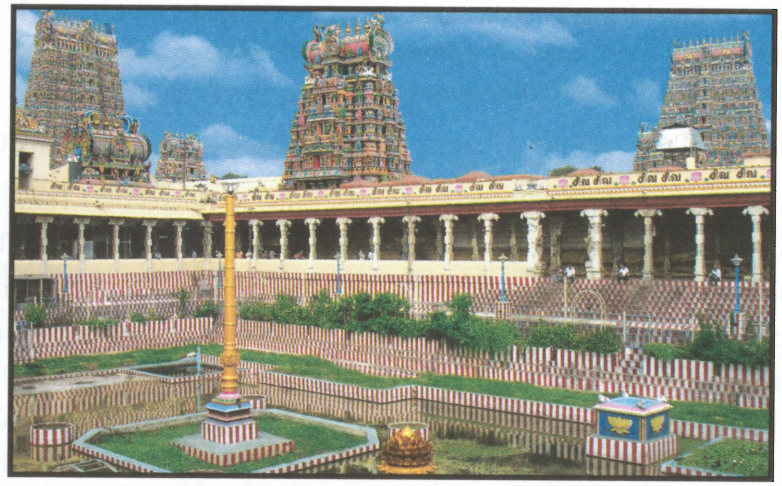
Madurai is known all over the world because of the maginificient temple of Goddess Meenakshi. It is the second largest city in the state The city is Madurai is well planned and laid out in the pattern of lotus flower, with the famous Meenakshi Sundareswarar temple in the center. It is situated on the banks of River Vaigai.Lord Siva appeared and drops of nectar (Mathuram) from his locks fell on the town and so it came to be known as Madurai.

Sri Meenakshi Sundareswarar Temple :

This is a twin temple. The temple in the southern side is dedicated to Devi Meenakshi and the other to Lord Sundareswarar. This is one of the biggest temple complexes in India. The temple is



Sri Meenakshi Sundarreswarar, Madurai



Golden Lotus Tank, Sri Meenkashi Temple.

about 258 meters in length and about 241.4 meters in breadth. It is also an ancient centre of worship as well as an art gallery of vast proportions.

The original temple was built by King Kulasekara Pandiyan. There are 12 temple gopurams (towers). The gopurams covered from top to bottom with multi-coloured images of celestial beings and mythological figures. The towers are noted for stucco work.

Sri Subramaniya Swami Temple, Thiruparankundrum.

The Meenakshi shrine is one of the 51 Shakthi peetams .It is one of the five (pancha) sabhas of Lord Nataraj. The Shrine is glorified as the *Velli ambalam.*

Golden Lotus Tank:

Inside the temple there is a tank called Golden Lotus Tank. It is believed that the king of Devas Indra worshiped Lord Shiva with Golden Lotus Flowers from this tank. The tank is surrounded by spacious corridors. Scenes from ***Thiruvilaiyadal Puranams*** are painted onwall of the northen corridors and on the wall of the southern corridors verses from the ancient famed Tamil devotional poems and ***Thirukkural*** have been inscribed on marbles slabs. On the Pillars of northen corridors are figures of 24 poets of the Third ***Tamil Sangam*** (Period), the merchant Dhanajeyan who saw the temple at first and then King Kulasekhara Pandiyan who first built the temple.

Thousand Pillared Hall:

This famous Thousand Pillared Hall is north east of the temple It was built by Dalavai Ariyanatha Mudaliyar in 1569 A.D. who built this treasure house of art.

Now this hall actually contains 985 pillars only. This space for the remaining 15 pillars were taken up for two small temples. The images of Narthana (dancing) Ganesh, Shiva, Radi, Manmatha, Arujuna, Bhima, Chandramathi, Saraswathi, Mohini, Bitchadanar are magnificent carvings.

Koodal Alagar Perumal Temple:

In the west of the city there is a ancient Vaishnavite temple with beautiful sculptures. This temple dedicated to Lord Vishnu is older than the Meenakshi Temple.

This temple is one of the 108 Divya Desams. The Moolavar (presiding deity)is know by the name ***"Koodal Alagar"*** and his consort is know as ***"Maduravalli"***. ***Periyalvar*** sang the

holy ***"Thirupallandu"*** in the Koodal Alagar temple in Madurai which is appraise of Lord Vishnu. Periyalvar's loving daughter is ***Andal.***

Other Temples in the City:

Sri Madanagopala temple, Sri Inmail Nanmaitharuvai temple, Thiruvappudayar temple, Sri Muktheeswarar temple, Sri Mariamman temple, Thalakulam Sri Prasanna Venkatachalapathy temple.

Around Madurai

Thirupparankundram: (8 km)

It is located 8 km south of Madurai Railway Junction. One of the six abodes of Lord Subramanya the second son of Lord Shiva is located here. It is a 6th century rock-cut temple. Subramanya married to Deivanai here and many centuries before this has been regarded the most auspicious plays to conduct marriages. The rock-cut temple of Subramanya here is thronged with pilgrims on all days of special worship.

Alagarkovil (21 km)

This temple is one of the 108 Divya Desams. It is called Alagar Hills or Alagarkovil. The God Alagar comes to Madurai Vaigai River and goes to merit Manduga Rishi who was living us a frog,he comes in correct form that he prays God Vishnu being as Alagar. The temple is situated on a hill amidst panoramic surroundings. The shrine is know as ***Sundararaja Perumal*** and the hill is Solamalai. The temple also contain some beautiful carvings making a visit regarding. About 2 km away from Alagarkovil one small hillock is ***Palamudir Cholai,*** one of the six abodes of Lord Subramanya.

Other Shrines:

Thirumohur Sri Kalamegaperumal Temple (12 km), Thiruvathavur Sri Thirmarinathar Temple (24 km), Othakkadi Sri Narashimhar Temple (10 km), Thirvedakam Sri Etakanatheswarar Temple (18km). Kuruvithurai Sri Siddharathavallaba Perumal Temple (30 km).

Srivilliputhur: (70 km from Madurai)

It is the birth place of two Vaishnavite Alwars Sri ***Andal*** and her father ***Periyalvar***. Andal is the greatest devotional poet in Tamil.

Sri Andal

The Vatapatrasayi temple has one of the most impressive gopurams in the South. The wooden car of the temple with nine massive wheels is said to be the biggest and heaviest in the country.

The main attraction at Srivilliputhur is the shrine of Lord Ranganatha and Andal where their images are installed in bridal attire. Garuda Alwar is enshrined by the side of Sri Ranganatha.

Andal`s devotional Tamil songs, known as Thiruppavai, are as popular as Meera`s bhajans. The shrines of Sri Vatapatrasayee (Vishnu reclining on Adi Sesha), Sri Navaneeta Krishna and Sri Srinivasa Perumal in Srivilliputhur are noteworthy too.

KARAIKUDI

(120 km from Madurai)

This small town is known for its magnificent mansions constructed by the Chettiars. Around Karaikudi there are many temples are worth to see.

Kunrakkudi : (10 km from Karaikudi)

Kunrakkudi is noted for its beautiful hill temple dedicated to Shanmuganathar. The name Kunrakudi is derived from the sacred Kunru(hill) housing the temple. Kunrakkudi is also known as Mayuragir. The presiding deity is the six faced Shanmugar mounted on his peacock flanked by Valli and Deivayanai. The sanctum faces the east. There is a cave temple dedicated to Shiva with a 5 tiered Gopuram at the foot of the hill. This cave temple is of great archeological significance. There are three caves here, dating back to the 8th century.

Pillayarpatti: (13 km from Karaikudi)

Sri Karpaka Vinayakar

This Pillayarpatti small village derives its name from the image of Lord Ganesh known us Karpaga Vinayagar. The Lord Vinayaka carved on the wall of an ancient rock at Temple. It is one of the oldest Cave Temples (Rock Cut) temples of Tamilnadu.

Sri Karpaka Vinayakar is the presiding deity here, and he is portrayed with two arms and a trunk curled towards his right in the valampuri mode. This 6 feet tall mammoth image of Ganesha is a bas relief in an excavated cave, off of a hill in the precincts of the temple.

Tiruppathur: (20 km from Karaikudi)

The Tiruthalinathar temple is a grand Shivastalam in this town This shrine is regarded as the 6th of the Tevara Stalams in the Pandya region of Tamilnadu. This 15 acre temple has 4 prakarams and a beautiful vimanam with several stucco images. Stone images of Nataraja and Sivakami are seen in this temple. The Yoga Bhairavar shrine (facing West) is of significance here.

Thirumayam Temples

Thirukoshtiyur: (8 km from Thiruppathur)

This beautiful Vishnu temple is one of the 108 diviya desam. This is also the birthplace of Nambi Andar, Guru of Sri Ramanuja. In this Vishnu temple the Lord is worshipped in four different postures in a four-tier structure.

Legend says that Siva, Brahma, Devas, and Saints were unable to tolerate the misrule of Hiranyakaspu, so they approach Lord Vishnu at Parkkadal. They decide to meet at Kadambamuni Ashram. They came in groups, thus this place is called Thirukoshtiyur.

Thirumayam: (21 km from Thiruppathur)

Thirumayam is an ancient place is situated 21 km from Thiruppathur. Here Siva and Vishnu temple covered by a single compound wall. The temples are built with a single rock. Girvalam (going around the hill) can be done only by covering both the temples. The Vishnu temple is one of the 108 diviya desam. The main shrine is also Kudavarikoil - carving the hill.Sathya Maharshi performed penance here. The temple was built 1300 years ago by Mahendra Pallavan.

Other Shrines:

Piranmalai (32 km from thirupathur), Avudayarkovil (48 km from Pudukottai), Thiruppunnavasal (26 km from Avudayarkovil), Kalayarkovil (45 km from Thiruppathur).

RAMESWARAM

(162 kms from Madurai)

Rameswaram is an island situated in the gulf of manner at the tip of Indian peninsula and is a very important pilgrim center of the Hindus and also one of the most sacred place of India. It is also the seat of one of the 12 Jothirlingas. It is said that Lord Rama worshiped Lord Shiva, on his return from Lanka after killing King Ravana. So this island is sacred to both the Saivites and Vaishnavites.

Sri Ramanathaswami temple:

According to legend, the Lingam at this temple was installed by Sri Rama. On his return after the battle of Lanka, Rama wanted to install the Lingam to absolve himself of the sin of vanquishing Ravana.

Rama sent Hanuman to Mount Kailas to fetch the Lingam. Since Hanuman was late, Sita made a Lingam out of sand. This was installed as Rama Lingam, and worship was over. Mean while, Hanuman rushed in with the Lingam from Kailas. He was disappointed to find another Lingam already in place. To pacify Hanuman, Rama had the Hanumath Lingam (Viswa Lingam) also installed alongside and ordered that pujas be first performed for the Viswa Lingam.

The temple has 22 theerthas (Holy springs), which are believed to have medicinal properties.

Agnitheertham:

The Ramanathaswami temple faces east. The sea here, about 100 meters from the main entrance of the temple is very calm and therefore ideal for bathing. The water of this place is considered sacred and known as Agnitheertham.

Ghanthamathana Parvatham:

The Ganthamathana Parvatham is a hillock to the north of the temple. From here one can get a fine view of the island. There is a pretty two-storeyed mandapam here and ***Ramas Padam*** (feet) placed on a chakra for worship attracks pilgrims.

Kothandaramarswami Temple:

This beautiful temple is situated 7 km from Ramanathaswami temple. Legend has it that Vibhishana surrendered to Rama at this place and Lakshmana performed the preliminary Patabhishekam for him. Here we can see the idols of Rama, Sita, Lakshmana, Hanuman, and Vibhishana.

Dhanushkodi:

The southern most tip of the island Dhanushkodi was completely washed away by the 1964 cyclone, to reach ***Sethu***

Agni Theertham, Rameswaram

Theertham at Dhanuskodi, one has to walk 3 km along the shores.

Sethu is a Sanskrit word to denote a bridge or cause way. It has now acquired special significance to mean the bridge across the ocean constructed and used by Rama to reach Srilanka. It is said that,

Sri Adijagannathaperumal, Thirupullani

at the request of Vibhishana and Ally of Rama, Rama broke the Sethu with one end of his bow and hence the name Dhanuskodi (Dhanus - Bow, Kodi - End) has come. Sethu Theertha is a 3 km from Dhanuskodi bus stand. There is also available local van. A dip in Sethu is considered very holy.

Around Rameswararam

Devipatnam or Navapashana (16 km from Ramanathapuram),

This beautiful coastal village is 16 km from Ramnathapuram. Here Sri Rama had installed nine stones in the sea to worship Navagraha (Nine planets). Devotees offer worship to the nine planets here.

Uthirakosamangai: (18 km from Ramanathapuram)

16-km southwest of Ramanathapuram stands the renowned Shiva temple of Uttarakosamangai. Manikkavachagar has sung of it. The Lord is Mangaleshvara and the Goddess Mangalesvari. The temple has inspired many Tamil works of devotion. So, of course, has the Ramanatha temple in Rameswaram. Here Lord Nataraj made of Emerald stones.

Nellaiappar Temple

Thirupullani :(14 km from Ramanathapuram)

This place is14 km from Ramanathapuram. There is a Vishnu temple, here dedicated to Lord Adi Jagannathaperumal. Sri Rama is said to have worshipped the deity and secured to bow to fight with Ravana. It also said that Rama lay on Dharba (grass) bed for 7 days in order to invoke the sea god for safe passage to Sri Lanka.

THIRUNELVELI

(151 km from Madurai)

Thirunelveli the headquarters of the district is another ancient city of Tamilnadu with a hoary tradition. It is mid way between Madurai and Kanyakumari and is located on the banks of the ***Thamaraparani*** river. Thirunelveli was once the capital of the Pandyas, and it has a history that goes back 2000 years.

Sri Gandhimathi Nellaiappar Temple:

The main attraction of Thirunelveli is the twin temples of Ganthimathi Nellaiappar dedicated to Parvathi and Siva respectively. The temple, built by a Pandya king in the 7th century A D. Rare jewels, musical pillars, thousand pillared hall, and sculptures are attractions of this temple.It is one of the five (pancha) sabhas of Lord Nataraj. The Shrine is glorified as the ***Thamara Sabha.***

Krishnapuram: (13 km)

About 13 km from Thirunelveli, is Krishnapuram. The temple here is dedicated to Lord Vishnu. There are a number of life size sculptures in this temple.

Sankaran Kovil:(56 km from Tirunelveli)

SankaranKovil has three shrines dedicated to Lord Sankaralinga, to Goddess Gomathi Amman and, betwen these two, to Lord Sankaranarayana, a combination of Siva and Vishnu. According to a legend, Sri Parvathidevi once wished to see Siva and Vishnu in one form. Siva bade her to go earth and perform penance. On the Full Moon day in Adi (July-Aug), Lord Siva gave darshan as Sankaranarayana. The Sun rays fall on the pedestal twice in a year.

Kazhugumalai: (24 km from Sankaran Kovil)

The rock-cut cave temple dedicated to Lord Shiva is worth visiting. The Jain temples here are among the oldest in the country and have some excellent bas-relief sculptures is also worth to see.

Tenkasi: (55 km)

Those who worship Sri Kasi Viswanathar in Tenkasi get the same benefit of worship undertaken in Utharakasi (Varanasi). This temple is a palace of sculptural skill of the stone craftsmen of Tamilnadu. 172 feet Rajagopuram (main tower) was built in 1456 by King Parakrama Pandian, Then it was damaged in 1924 due to thunder and it was rebuilt wi th height of 163 feet.

Courtallam (59 km , 5 km from Tenkasi) :

This wonderful temple is just near to the famous Courtallam waterfalls. The temple is conch shaped prakara . Shiva showed himself as Brahma and Vishnu. The Tirikootamandapam here is the site of festivities here. Parvati`s shrine is also important and is regarded as one of the 51 Shakti Peethams. It is one of the five (pancha) sabhas of Lord Nataraj. The Shrine is glorified as the ***Chithira Sabha.***

Legends says Saint Agastyar proceeded south to stabilize the earth, and relieve the instability caused by the guests that arrived in the Himalayas for the wedding of Shiva and Parvati.

Papanasam (60 km) :

The famous Shiva temple is located at the bottom of Western Ghats and also very near to the origin of the River Tamaraparani. The temple is dedicated to Papavinasar, is known for absolution of sin. Every year The Chitrai Vishu festival is celebrated in the month of April and another festival Adi Ammavasai is celebrated in the month of July and lakhs of people congregate there.

Thiruchendur (62 km) :

The temple here is one of the six abodes of Lord Subramaniya, situated on the Bank of Bengal. It attracts thousand of tourist and piligrims. After defeating demon Soorapadma, he came

Thiruchandur Temple

to this place offered his prayers to Lord Shiva. The foundation of this temple was laid on the Kandamadana Parvata or red sandstone rock of this coast. The temple also has a huge tower of about 140 feet. The Skandasashti festival is celebrated at this temple in November each year.

Navathirupathi:

There are nine Vaishnavite centers on the banks of river Tamaraparani. These nine temples are called Navathirupathi. In

Srivaikuntam Temple

Nanguneri Temple

these Vishnu temples, the Prime Deities themselves are worshipped as the Navagrahas and so there are no separate shrines for the Navagrahaas, as found in other temples. They are 1. Srivaikuntam, 2. Thiruvaragunamangai (Natham), 3. Thirupuliyankudi, 4,5, Thirutholaivillimangalam (Erattai Thirupathi), 6. Thirukulanthai (Perunkulam), 7. Thiruperai (Thenthiruperai), 8. Thirukolur, 9. Thirugurukoor (Azhwarthirungari). It is difficult to cover all the temples at a single stretch traveling by bus.

Srivaikuntam is situted 30 km from Tirunelveli, from where frequent bus services are available. The Prime Deity Lord Vaikuntanathan faces east in standing posture, with Adisesha serving as an umbrella – an unusual presentation as he is always the bed to the Lord Who comfortably lies down on him. The Lord's Consorts, Vaikuntanayaki and Choranathanayaki dwell in different shrines in the outer praakaram of the sanctum sanctorum. This is quite a big temple and we have to cross several mandapams to reach

Thirukurngudi Temple

the sanctum.Milk abihisheka is considered very sacred. It is considered as a place of important for Shukra.

Alwar Thirunagari is 5 km from Srivaikuntam. In Alwar Thirunagari, the Lord appeared on his own. According to tradition, the feet of the Lord are below the earth. It is the birth place of Saint Nammalvar, said to be an incarnation of Lord Vishnu. He was meditating under a holy tamarind tree in the temple for 16 years. Nammalwar was the author of more than a thousand verses of Divya Prabhandam.

Nanguneri: (29 km)

This ancient Vishnu temple is surrounded by 4 lakes. Hence the name Nangu Eri-Nanguneri. Lord Vishnu is dedicated to Deivanathan, Vanamamalai (Thotharinathan). Almost in all temples, there would be only one Swambumurthy but in Nanguneri there are 11, Sridevei, Bhoodevi, Sun, Moon, Bruhu Rishi, Markandeya, Urvasi, Thilothama , Garuda and Vishvaksenar. This is a unique feature of this temple.

The Lord in the temple is bathed in gingely oil each day and the oil is saved in a well here. Those suffering from skin diseases use to apply the oil in their body and consume a few drops for cure.

Thirukurngudi: (42 km)

This beautiful Vishnu temple is 42 Km west of Tirunelveli. It is on the Tirunelveli-Nanguneri route. This is one of the 108 Vaishnava Divya desam. The temple is on the banks of Nambi river where Lord Varahamurthy shrunk his huge form with His Consort, hence the place is called Thirukurungudi.

The Lord appears here in Nindra (standing), Amarndha (sitting), Nadandha (walking) and Kidandha (lying) positions. Thirukurungudi is also known as Kuranga Kshethram. Kuranga is the name of Boomadevi who performed penance on the Lord in this holy place.

KANYAKUMARI

(91 km from Thirunelveli, 87 km from Thiruvananthapuram)

The Southern most tip of Indian Peninsula also a famous Pilgrim center at the confluence of Indian Ocean, the Bay of Bengal, and the Arabian Sea. Kanyakumari has been named after the Goddess Parvathi in one of her incarnations as Devi Kanniya did penance on one of the rocks of this land's end to obtain the hand of Lord Siva.

Sri Kumariamman Temple:

The 3000 years old temple at this place is dedicated to the Goddess Parvathi who as Devi Kanniya, the virgin Goddess, did penance to obtain the hand of Lord Siva. The temple stands near where three oceans meet: the Indian Ocean, the Bay of Bengal, and the Arabian Sea. The image of the Goddess in the sanctum is marvelous in its serenity and beneficence. She carries a necklace in her right hand.The eastern gate, facing the Bay of Bengal is opened only five times a year.

Legends says that the demon Baanaasuran wreaked havoc on the inhabitants of this world, and that Lord Vishnu requested the Gods and the humans to request primeval energy Paraasakthi to vanquish the demon. Answering the prayers of the oppressed, Shakti appeared as a young virgin girl at Kanyakumari and commenced penance with the desire of marrying Shiva at Suchindram.

Legend has it that the celestial Sage Narada, fixed the midnight hour as the auspicious time for the wedding. When Shiva's procession reached a site by name Vazhukkumpaarai, a rooster crowed, heralding daybreak, and that Shiva assuming that the auspicious hour was past, returned to Suchindram. The disappointed Goddess decided to spend her life in Kanyakumari as a virgin, and that all the food prepared for the wedding was laid waste and that it turned into the colored sand seen on the southern shores of the Indian peninsula.

The demon Banaasuran upon hearing of Shakti's story proceeded to Kanyakumari to win her hand in marriage by force, and

Devi Kanyakumari

this led to a fierce battle in which he was slain by her. There are a total of 11 theerthams associated with the temple in the ocean surrounding the area. The confluence of the seas, at the southern tip of the Indian peninsula has been held sacred for centuries.

Suchindram: (14 km)

Suchindram means the place where Indra the King of Devas attained purification. Suchindram temple may will be considered as one of the storehouses of the richest specimens of art and sculpture in stone. There is fine, large fane, with a beautiful tank. It is one of the few temples in the country where the Trinity, Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva, are worshipped. The Linga, named " ***Sthanumalayan***" , is in three parts; the top represents Lord Siva, the middle Lord Vishnu, and the base Lord Brahma. ***Sthanu*** is the name of Siva, ***Mal*** of Vishnu, and ***Ayan*** of Brahma. The temple has a beautiful gopuram, musical pillars and an excellent of ***Hanuman***.

Suchindrum Temple

Nagaraja Temple: (19 km)

This ancient temple is 19 km from Kannyakumari is Nagercoil, which contains the celebrated Nagaraja temple. The sanctum is a simple thatched shed, with mud walls. It enshrines the King of Serpents. Tradition states that a King of Kalakkad was cured of leprosy when he performed penance in the temple. He then rebuilt it in the Kerala style. He might have been Bhuthalavira Sri Vira Udaya Marthandavarma, who ruled Venad, with Kalakkad as his capital, from 1516 to 1535. It is believed that snakebite is not fatal within a kilometre of the temple. The fane has some Jain sculptures.

Nagaraja Temple

Kumarakovil: (34 km, 15 km from Nagerkovil)

Kumarakovil is at the foot of the Velimalai hills , about 34-km from Kannyakumari. The Lord Muruga Temple is built on the hillock

Thiruvattar Temple

about 200 feet height in a lush green field of Paddy, Plantain and Coconut trees. The temple is noted for architectural beauty. The side of the Lord also enshrines goddess Valli, the spouse of Lord Subramanya in the temple.

Thiruvattar: (59 km, 40 km from Nagerkovil)

This beautiful temple is located in Kanyakumari district towards Thirvananthapuram. This is one of the 108 Vaishnava Divya desam.

The presiding deity here is Sri Aadi Kesava Perumal in a reclining posture faces west. As in Thiruvananthapuram, the deity is viewed through three openings in the sanctum. The sanctum has been designed so that the rays of the setting sun illuminate the face of the deity.

The architecture here, as with several other temples in Kanyakumari district resembles that of the temples of Kerala. Worship protocols followed here are also the same as those of Kerala. This temple is an important center of worship and is referred to as Aadi Anantam and Dakshina Vaikuntham. Tiruvattar is referred to in the Sangam period Tamil work Puranaanooru.

Other Shrines:

Gukanatheeswarar Siva temple (2 km), Murugan Kundrum (3 km), Thirupathisaram 5 km from Nagerkovil (Vaisnavite Diviya Desam), Mandaikkadu Bhagawathi Amman temple (42 km), Chitaral Jain temple (52 km).

Abinaya Arts

Designed by Vivek Graphics, Madurai.

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TAMIL NADU

Scale 1:965,000

LEGEND

- Golden Quadrilateral Highway
- North-South Corridor Highway
- National Highway with No.
- State Highway with Number & Other Roads
- Road Distances in Kms.
- State Boundary
- District Boundary
- Railway Line
- CHENNAI — State Capital
- VELLORE — District Capital
- Annur — Other Locations
- Kaveri — Water Bodies
- Yercaud — Places of Tourist Interest
- Pilgrim Centre : Hindu/Christian/Muslim
- Historical/Archaeological site
- Hill Station
- Wildlife / Bird Sanctuary
- Water Falls / Lake / Reservoir
- Beach
- Other Places of interest
- Airport
- Seaport

ANDHRA PRADESH

KARNATAKA

KERALA

TAMILNADU

BENGALURU (BANGALORE)

CHENNAI

KOLAR

CHITTOOR

TIRUVALLUR

KANCHEEPURAM

VELLORE

KRISHNAGIRI

TIRUVANNAMALAI

DHARMAPURI

SALEM

NAMAKKAL

ERODE

NILGIRIS

COIMBATORE

TIRUPPUR

KARUR

TIRUCHIRAPALLI

PERAMBALUR

ARIYALUR

CUDDALORE

VILUPPURAM

PUDUCHERRY

MYSURU (MYSORE)

CHAMRAJNAGAR

UDAGAMANDALAM

PALGHAT

DINDIGUL

THANJAVUR

PUDUKKOTTAI

MADURAI

SIVAGANGA

THENI

VIRUDUNAGAR

RAMANATHAPURAM

TIRUNELVELI

THOOTHUKUDI

KANNIYAKUMARI

NAGERCOIL

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

NAGAPATTINAM

THIRUVARUR

KARAIKAL (Puducherry)

Bay of Bengal

Arabian Sea

Indian Ocean

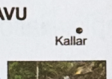
Palk Strait

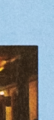
Palk Bay

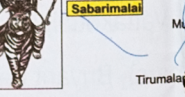
Gulf of Mannar

SRI LANKA

Lakshadweep Sea







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Sri Mangadu Kamatchiamman Business Corporation
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TAMILNADU - PHYSICAL

ROUTE MAP TO ARUPADAIVEDU

ROUTE MAP TO NAVAGRAHA TEMPLES

ROUTE MAP TO NAVATIRUPATHI TEMPLES

ROAD DISTANCES (in Kilometres)

	CHENNAI	CHIDAMBARAM	COIMBATORE	CUDDALORE	DHARMAPURI	DINDIGUL	ERODE	HOSUR	KANCHIPURAM	KANNIYAKUMARI	KODAIKANAL	KARAIKUDI	KUMBAKONAM	MADURAI	NAGAPATTINAM	PUDUCHERRY	PUDUKKOTTAI	RAJAPALAYAM	RAMESWARAM	SALEM	TENKASI	THANJAVUR	TIRUCHIRAPPALLI	TIRUNELVELI	TIRUVANNAMALAI	THOOTHUKUDI	UDAGAMANDALAM	VELLORE	YERCADU
YERCADU	0	229																											0
VELLORE	0	229																										0	229
UDAGAMANDALAM	0	405	234																								0	405	234
THOOTHUKUDI	0	536	569	384																						0	536	569	384
TIRUVANNAMALAI	0	526	352	92	176																				0	526	352	92	176
TIRUNELVELI	0	544	60	476	587	402																		0	544	60	476	587	402
TIRUCHIRAPPALLI	0	279	216	261	301	308	169																0	279	216	261	301	308	169
THANJAVUR	0	55	309	235	291	356	327	224														0	55	309	235	291	356	327	224
TENKASI	0	317	287	55	552	105	484	595	410												0	317	287	55	552	105	484	595	410
SALEM	0	381	195	140	373	147	355	205	200	29										0	381	195	140	373	147	355	205	200	29
RAMESWARAM	0	389	326	235	228	224	414	261	537	536	418								0	389	326	235	228	224	414	261	537	536	418
RAJAPALAYAM	0	252	307	74	243	213	81	478	141	410	521	336						0	252	307	74	243	213	81	478	141	410	521	336	
PUDUKKOTTAI	0	196	178	190	270	57	59	262	266	244	351	358	219				0	196	178	190	270	57	59	262	266	244	351	358	219	
PUDUCHERRY	0	227	411	405	207	480	170	196	194	103	455	418	159	236		0	227	411	405	207	480	170	196	194	103	455	418	159	236	
NAGAPATTINAM	0	172	136	322	314	274	596	79	134	388	276	370	435	331	301	0	172	136	322	314	274	596	79	134	388	276	370	435	331	301
MADURAI	0	237	326	111	85	167	222	159	158	128	151	334	133	325	436	251	0	237	326	111	85	167	222	159	158	128	151	334	133	325	436	251
KUMBAKONAM	0	197	69	128	96	282	274	234	356	39	94	348	196	230	395	288	263	0	197	69	128	96	282	274	234	356	39	94	348	196	230	395	288	263
KARAIKUDI	0	254	120	294	358	203	205	287	240	279	215	160	271	387	253	270	440	269	0	254	120	294	358	203	205	287	240	279	215	160	271	387	253	270	440	269
KODAIKANAL	0	182	136	82	176	264	40	167	138	230	241	97	99	233	276	215	363	396	259	0	182	136	82	176	264	40	167	138	230	241	97	99	233	276	215	363	396	259
KANNIYAKUMARI	0	324	362	439	242	479	568	353	172	295	464	146	400	370	91	586	151	567	678	493	0	324	362	439	242	479	568	353	172	295	464	146	400	370	91	586	151	567	678	493
KANCHIPURAM	0	617	360	393	250	396	285	113	320	460	518	259	534	285	270	549	128	531	485	69	309	0	617	360	393	250	396	285	113	320	460	518	259	534	285	270	549	128	531	485	69	309
HOSUR	0	236	627	393	403	397	318	370	271	353	403	485	163	477	358	303	469	158	451	348	167	192	0	236	627	393	403	397	318	370	271	353	403	485	163	477	358	303	469	158	451	348	167	192
ERODE	0	229	346	530	326	179	237	206	277	273	193	291	373	66	366	196	143	357	213	417	141	266	95	0	229	346	530	326	179	237	206	277	273	193	291	373	66	366	196	143	357	213	417	141	266	95
DINDIGUL	0	143	322	312	305	101	81	173	63	213	277	122	148	230	159	222	134	70	214	295	274	262	367	188	0	143	322	312	305	101	81	173	63	213	277	122	148	230	159	222	134	70	214	295	274	262	367	188
DHARMAPURI	0	300	133	96	236	531	297	307	301	289	274	274	257	307	389	67	381	282	207	373	120	355	272	167	96	0	300	133	96	236	531	297	307	301	289	274	274	257	307	389	67	381	282	207	373	120	355	272	167	96
CUDDALORE	0	259	252	244	283	134	543	246	333	107	301	151	21	206	386	384	192	460	149	173	452	125	434	397	180	221	0	259	252	244	283	134	543	246	333	107	301	151	21	206	386	384	192	460	149	173	452	125	434	397	180	221
COIMBATORE	0	350	225	164	89	321	438	469	265	172	297	227	337	365	253	312	394	158	386	256	202	378	305	438	98	358	187	0	350	225	164	89	321	438	469	265	172	297	227	337	365	253	312	394	158	386	256	202	378	305	438	98	358	187
CHIDAMBARAM	0	354	47	263	247	262	330	181	552	210	328	74	310	104	68	170	396	348	196	469	113	168	461	172	443	401	227	225	0	354	47	263	247	262	330	181	552	210	328	74	310	104	68	170	396	348	196	469	113	168	461	172	443	401	227	225
CHENNAI	0	230	492	183	307	398	400	307	71	689	409	479	299	447	334	162	395	532	573	334	506	334	315	596	187	580	539	140	363	0	230	492	183	307	398	400	307	71	689	409	479	299	447	334	162	395	532	573	334	506	334	315	596	187	580	539	140	363	0